

March 13, 1971

Toronto
Dear John

I am picking this letter up today but will not finish it and send it one until after Monday's mail.

But another idea on Czechoslovakia. I wonder what you think of the possibility of approaching some of the dissident GPers in the Toronto area ~~of~~ protesting the political trials--the Clarke's, the Ryersons. I would say Boyd but he appears to have pulled completely out of politics and probably would understand that as bringing him back in--we should dispose not of him --we should challenge him. But the others who are still active in political life made this their standing ground. You could even take that appeal around to them to get them to endorse it. When I saw it it was so narrow in its appeal that I didn't think we could take it anywhere, but now thinking it over why wouldn't it be a good idea to approach them on it. We have nothing to lose--I think there is some possibility that they might endorse it. The baiss of ~~the~~ releasing the news to the press would be that they for what they are know as, have joined in the de and supported by Sartre and others. The trials are still going on and now they are getting wider publicity. An eminent lawyer associated with the Belgian Doits des hommes has recently protested that the Czech government refused him permission to attend the trials. It appears that the sessions were closed the other day because the court said that many Trotskyists from other countries were attending and making known their sympathy for the defendants--Slansky's son was barred from admission --apparently he has expressed sympathy. I am all for one of us going to see these people just to try and make contact with them on a serious political basis. It would be good if we could get Ryerson sometime to speak on some aspect of Canadian history at a forum.

The morning mail of March 15 included the envelope of ~~air~~ air printed matter. I was particularly glad to get the International Discussion bulletin the article from Queen's Quarterly, the old Vanguard and of course the various peices of material that show what we are doing these days

But to get to your letter of a few days back

I think that since you wrote your opening paragraph that you have received my comments on the March issue of LC, and since the last paragraph you would have received my second article on Britain. I do not think we should put a London date-line first because I am not there and do not have access to such London material at the Tribune, The Morning Star, The state cap paper, Healy nor consultation with our British comrades--and that may well show and we need the escape route. No purpose in putting Brussels--why not just put in a note that I am in Europe. This gives us all kinds of excuses --the Begian and French papers are weeklies and I have no contact with them anyway except receiving a copy.

I intend to send you some more material Tuesday or Wednesday because after that I will be tied down with the U.S. meeting, Connie and Al and either Joe or Barry. I thought that the Saskatoon talk turned out not too badly also. Although it is unfortunate that I did not have the time to write it up that way for delivery.

The pool hall I am all for working out an arrangement that will carry u over the next ~~2~~ 1/2 year. That is a particularly harsh demand that he is making--not rent for three months. ~~is~~ unacceptable...we cannot afford it.

First the bad months are July and August--and those are the only two we should consider--not a third. Dont be too soft about that air conditioning, stuff etc. He knew all that when he came in. He had ~~the~~ the previous tenants experience too behind him. We have played ball--did the carpentry he asked, new soft drink cooler and he really doesn't do any maintenance at all which is one of his problems. (I hope that Aikenheads have finally got that door for us and George has installed it)

I think there are two things we should do;

We do not care whether the pool hall is open or not in the summer --let us agree to giving him one months rent free and he can decide whether he wants to close or open--that is --we agree to split with him the worst part of the seasons costs. 50 / 50 a 9% discount--for this year only. ^{no other}

The other thing we should do is call that previous tenant down to have a talk. We have him tied on the lease ~~for~~. He has an interest in seeing Angel make a go of it. This fellow will know how to kill ~~the~~ what you describe as a Sally Ann atmosphere which Angel has allowed to develop and which there is no doubt in my mind stops many people from using the tables. We should tell Angel that. I wouldn't go up there for a game with all these lumpens hanging around. Ansanasoff never had them. ~~It~~ It is not our task but Ansanasoff would show him how to deal with this problem quickly. I think that that is a good proposition. By the way dont let him think that that lease is not binding in anyway. If he thinks that then there is nothing to stop him just walking out and away say May 31. He signed the lease and it is a good proposition. The merit of bringing up the nature of the crowd etc is to show him that he hasn't got what there is in it which I think is essentially true.

Let's get through this year---then yes -we should seriously consider selling all the tables and turning the space over to office--much of which we would want--and I feel sure will be able to afford.

Incidnetly look up the lease information on the drug store. Hedo not think we ever got a copy of that lease but the tenant showed me once and I took note of it and gave the niformation to either Helen or Coral. If it is this year we want him out. ---or want to jump the rent considerably. Dont let this slide---let's find out when it expires so we know what we are doing.

Money- Did you talk to Harry about the press. It is probable that he has still done nothing although I raised a little hell with him about it before leaving. We want him to put an ad in to see what we can get for the big press. I cannot see us hanging on to it when we dont have a good small press and we are so hard up for funds. He must do this for us right away. It is a very simple matter..all he has to do is pick up a phone and give them the necessary copy. Coral can handle all enquiries. Harry should look up the back issues of this magazine and see what this type of press is selling for. We paid something over \$6,000. I cannot imagine depreciatiotn is much. Of course we have to know what they are generally selling for at once so we can work out an asking price. This is not hard to find out---Harry can phone around as if he was in the market for one. A while back he rhymed off something like \$2,500 but in my opinion he has no basis at all for that. I would think that it would get \$4,000. Why would depreciation be so high--after all we bought it second hand and it is in good shape. We want cash on the line. Let us move on that.

I have taken note of the information on Peng. Do not worry about sending him any more money. I will handle that from out of my pay as long as I am here.

I see in one of your run downs of debts we have outstanding Dick F's name appears and I think you also have the YS. But if I am not mistaken that is what we took out the loan from Stu to cover. I seem to recall quite clearly that we paid Dick F off and also the YS CO. As for John and Colleen's debt. I took it for granted that we had a sheet of all those debts made out in our books. But now that I think of it it may well be that that debt appears in the headquarters account. For instance as you know we borrowed a substantial sum of money from Vern at a critical turning point --that amount was agreed by Regual and all would be recognized ~~as an investment~~ as an investment in the building which either she or Hans would pay off (and get credit for from Mrs M) as soon as they accumulated some dough. I think Hans was going to do that as soon as he got a job--which he has since worked for some while now. If I am not mistaken the money we owe John and Colleen was borrowed at about the same time for the same purpose. I feel quite confident that Helen would know all about this--Helen Olson. But now I see you do have the record so all the above speculation is out. Yes, check that amount with John and Colleen again. Whatever the amount was we borrowed we had to pay back a slab on. They both went to Cuba and we had to give them back ~~the amount~~ part of the money to allow them to do so. Our records should be clear--with that little reminder--I do not see where there would be any confusion or argument.

I don't know about this proposition of theirs about a mimeograph machine but I don't see why the center should have anything to do with it. Montreal has an operation--perhaps it has a fund drive for money for this purpose and J and C wish to make a heavy contribution--that is their privilege I hope that we can give them the money right away without too much trouble---and Dick ~~and~~ P's too. That was the terms that we borrowed on. That is why I am raising the idea again that we should move on the press. That may solve the immediate problem.

I see I am too late to make any sensible contribution to the debate on the fund drive--the circular arrived this morning. Somewhat alarmed by the fact that the youth and league drive is taking place at the same time however I guess the arguments must have been substantial.

I note George's comments on raising money. Yes I can think of a few occasions that we have not picked up money that we could have. ~~For instance~~ ~~the amount~~ And I have been one of the problems in this respect. For instance I feel certain that if I had pushed ever so little we would have that money that John and Colleen loaned us completely in our operation as a gift. Then there is another occasion--if I had pushed a little again with George B instead of all that money being invested in tool and the van and keeping George in that ridiculous adventure along with Harry --they are going to lose everything I feel quite sure--we would have had a couple of thousand there. I think we have to change the atmosphere around us with regards to that type of money--I don't doubt we are in some way responsible for the situation where Pam and Darrell are buying a house--they are such young people and to my knowledge have no family ideas. I am going to change my ways but I'm not there--so others can change the atmosphere.

I don't know that we have that real possibility that George talks about but obviously there is some from the two cases I mention above. You mention Karen and her family--there is also the Jones (Sheila) Terry told me his old man was a Sarnia worker and Lix is out off I understand. But the other

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two--it is a matter of some older and maturer comrade when next in Saskatoon having a talk with these people--I had hoped to see both Karen and Sheila's mothers but had no time last trip. Why doesn't John Steele make a tour of the country before the summer is gone--and make time for that Saskatoon project. Probably John can go student fare, he would probably like to see Sheila and Kevin--and we could probably hold enough meetings on say trade union developments to cover cost alright.

But it is also a matter of creating an atmosphere around the movement about money.....one that is not so grim, as is usual around us--but rather is buoyant, confident in the future--you know--while we are in the present --the present too not just the future is ours. I think one of the problems is that we are not recruiting enough, not open enough. And I don't mean that from the point of view of getting more people who will pay dues and pledges which of course is needed. But we don't have an atmosphere around us of growth of bring them in--we are going places--NOW. I think that is true in the league and it is even more true on the youth. It is horribly obviously true in Montreal where it is obvious to me if we can break out of the awful routinism with the aid of Alan and Manon we could be three and four times as big as we are.

I have raised this matter earlier in a personal letter to Jackie. I even suggested that the youth should have a membership drive on a campaign basis. The Toronto branch and probably the entire League has to be really shaken. Brian B's handling of the sub drive was in my opinion just what should be the norm--but you recall all the aches and groans it got Brian's conduct at York (as distinct from our work at U of T) should also be the norm. I hope our financial drive handler is Brian or a very good substitute for him. I am all for Brian's style and think we should bring him into our leading ~~max~~ and public bodies to generate this style right through the movement

The Toronto youth situation when you think of it is or should I say was--very poor. I am hoping that the restructuring of the central leadership has done much to change things in Toronto. For instance why were we so long and so hesitant about bringing a guy like Don T right into the thick of things much more quickly. Most of our youth leaders are too old ~~in~~ too long in the saddle. We don't have enough Jacques and Carol's. Some of the rest we have to graduate quickly into the League to keep the youth continually open and moving---so youth will come into ~~the~~ movement that they can immediately identify as theirs where they can be leaders.

This would do something for us financially I am sure. People would automatically come us to us with inheritances, windfalls of various types. We would also have to find ways of publicizing that we expect such things to in order to get them. Well right now we have a financial drive on. We can really try all these things--new atmosphere, even suggest what we expect some real windfalls etc etc. I hope we can really handle this drive in the way it should be handled. Don't forget the muck up on the last Solidarity Drive. very illuminating oh what.

This drive should really be a big experience for the movement. And it must be given top notch care. Then I think we could well discuss the question of a drive to found a theoretical journal. But I don't think we should get involved in that until we have the drive really under our belt. Who is handling it

I would be interested to hear about NY--of course they have a real break from US tax laws. I understand that many parents put up to 2 and 3 000 dollars a year away for their child--can do so tax free--the money is the child's at

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18 or is it 21. So we recruit groups of youth whose parents were in that income category and who fall heir to these considerable sums just as they come around us. I had a bit of a talk with George N when there. It was apparent to me that our dear comrade Harry P has been saying all kinds of things about our operation

Re the proposition as to handling the fund drive in the press---with recognition that the key place of handling it and assuring its success is on the branch floors, in the league. ..has there been any talk about banquets, special meetings on the press, special ~~socialist~~ socialist with skits, tableau 's etc.

Idea one--naturally. Idea two yes but they should be very short and to the point--that item in a recent Militant showing how the US state department gives aid on the basis you buy arms contrasted to one of those traditional aid speeches by bouregois would be good. I dont see why idea three and four and the next paragraph couldn't be one. A 1921 edition of the paper as part of an insert seems a good idea---I dont think many would care for it as a poster. However.

I am not at all sure about all this protest over Progress Books. Possibly they actually are phasing out this operation. What about Bookworld --perhaps they will handle orders at a smaller discount. ..which would still be ok with us. What are the comrades doing in Montreal. There used to be a guy who handled all Soviet publications ..had a big warehouse.. one of our tours once made a deal with him which was very good. How did Jeff enquires work out with International and with Moscow.

Hope Dick is alright. I t ought the leaflet was good. Yes, we should report this in the paper. Suprised we didn't do it at the time--I see it happened on Feb 24. I hope Dick left them a few scars. I dont see that there is much of a basis for a campaign but we should publicize it. What have they said. I assume we have made an official protest to them. I would like to know what they say as a movement--if only through the mouth of one of their top "reponsible" leaders.

I have not written anything about the future plans --my staying--you and Naomi. I will do so right after this weekend

A few other matters---but I want to get this to the post office before it closes.

warmest regards

Ross