

*Appeal to the  
United Secretariat  
and Response  
by the  
Political Committee  
LSA/LSO*

5. LETTER FROM ROSS DOWSON TO WALTER D. AND WILL  
C OCTOBER 26, 1971

Dear Conrades,

At its meeting of October 17 the Political Committee passed the following motions relevant to you.

"M/c that the investigation including all taped testimonials and replies of the four comrades, (Terry H.S., Carol W., Will D., and Walter D.) sustains the evidence particularly with regards to the Halifax and Fredericton conferences and indirectly the evidence related to the minutes.

"M/c that the four Maritimers be reinstated and that the Political Bureau draw up a statement of censure of the four comrades to be submitted to the Political Committee's next meeting for ratification."

I have been delayed in sending you this information as I had hoped to send you the statement at the same time -- but the pressure of other work has delayed this. I will now send this separately just as soon as possible.

Comradely,

Ross D.

APPEAL TO THE UNITED SECRETARIAT OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Montreal, September 16, 1971.

Dear Comrades:

For more than two years now, the internal life of the Canadian section of the F.I. has been marked by a series of sometimes rather violent debates which very often reflect the debates in the International. Considering the epoch which we are entering, this situation is by no means abnormal.

Recently however, there have occurred rather disquieting developments in the course of these debates. We wish to inform you of our strong anxiety with respect to what we consider a witch-hunt atmosphere -- that is, against minorityites -- that the majority central leadership has established. We also wish to exercise our right to appeal certain disciplinary and organizational measures already taken against some of us, against some comrades of the Young Socialists/Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes, a sympathizing organization of the F.I.

Some of us belong to the Quebecois minority tendency which has existed within the section for more than a year. The others are comrades who have recently developed differences with the present line of the section on Latin America, the statutes of the International, work in the student milieu and work in the women's liberation movement. We are presently discussing the possibility of forming a united tendency on the basis of our positions on the above-mentioned questions.

Our uneasiness about a certain degeneration of the democratic norms of the section is not a recent thing. Already, in the preparation and course of the last convention of the section, a year ago, there were impermissible incidents, including publication by an important member of the Central Committee recommending to the members that they not read the minority documents and not give any representation to the minority on the new CC. Although these remarks were withdrawn by the comrade in question and the minority received representation on the CC, a vote was taken by the convention on a minority document, the English translation of which was not yet available, despite the fact that at most 15 percent of the delegates had the necessary linguistic knowledge to understand the French-language text.

During the year which has passed since the convention, the Quebec minority has faced an atmosphere of distrust and provocation, and has gradually been relieved of all its work areas. However, it was at the Waterloo educational conference and plenums of the Executive Council of the YS-LJS and the Central Committee of the LSA-LSO at the end of last August that the dissident-hunting atmosphere was definitively established. There, the comrades both of the Quebec minority and of the Atlantic provinces had to face provocation after provocation. Some of the members of the majority leadership demanded several times that they present their differences in public at the educational conference and that they vote against the majority reports at the EC of the YS-LJS, which for the members of the LSA-LSO would have constituted an open break of the section's discipline. The leadership made wide use of the technique of the amalgam, the dissident

positions being assimilated to those of Healy, Lambert and a minority which quit the section in 68-69.

The fact that two comrades of the Montreal LJS had already resigned from the editorial board of Liberation did not prevent the leadership of the YS-LJS from censuring them (around the Argentinian affair) and excluding them from the same editorial board, without informing them as to what disciplinary measures were to be proposed or permitting them to prepare a defense.

In another discipline matter, which had nothing to do with Quebec or the Atlantic provinces, a majority leader stated before the PC of the YS-LJS "we don't need any proof. You must have confidence in the leadership." !!!

In this atmosphere you can imagine our confusion when on August 31 the Political Committee of the LSA-LSO suspended the four members of the section in the Atlantic Provinces. This was followed on September 1 by the suspension of the entire Fredericton and Halifax locals (about thirty comrades altogether) by the Executive Council of the YS-LJS. We are sending you herewith some extracts of the minutes of the meetings concerned, in case you have not yet received them.

We wish to draw your attention to the following irregularities in the two cases:

- 1) The evidence in such a case must be founded on documents or verbal testimony. In both situations this material and the name of the accuser(s) must be specified to the accused so that they are able to prepare a defense. This has not been done despite the demands to this effect by the comrades implicated.
- 2) Taking measures, even before a preliminary report from the control commission or the commission of inquiry, and on the basis of secret testimony is completely irregular, given that there is no question of a breach of discipline outside the movement.
- 3) The control commission of the section was not elected at the last convention (by inadvertence) but was simply confirmed by the CC. It is composed entirely of majority comrades.
- 4) No procedure and no time limit have been ascertained for the two inquiries. Thus the suspension is limited and the comrades involved can in no way prepare their defense.
- 5) The exact meaning of the suspension has not been communicated to the comrades of the Atlantic provinces. Thus the whole work of the comrades is paralyzed, in a most promising situation. This region has experienced the highest growth rate both in membership and in political impact of the whole pan-Canadian Trotskyist movement in the last year.
- 6) These decisions were taken only two days after the plenum of the CC and after the departure of the comrades involved from Toronto. The PC minutes of August 27 indicate that the PC was already worrying about developments in the provinces but no effort was made to discuss with the comrades concerned. In this context, the motion adopted in the CC on the setting up of branches of the section and the refusal of the PC to constitute them in the Atlantic provinces takes on a purely factional character. They are aimed at preventing any recruitment, and this, in a very good situation.

On September 5, the National Committee of the LSO voted to expel comrade Gilbert Rousseau of Chibougamau for the following reasons; nonpayment of dues, no correspondence with the leadership, trade union work outside the control of the leadership. The majority of the NC rejected a



Page 3 ...Appeal to the United Secretariat...

proposal to write a formal letter to this comrade informing him that he was not paying off his debts and that if he did not enter into regular contact, measures would be taken against him. The majority of the NC claim that it is not a disciplinary measure. We are sending you a copy of the letter that the NC sent to comrade Rousseau.

On September 10, we made telephone contact (Chibougamau is 700 miles from Montreal, including 200 miles by gravel road, and learned that 1) he had just received the NC's letter of September 6, this letter being the first official communication he had received since April 18, 2) that he had sent his dues and a report of trade union activities to the NC on September 8 before receiving the NC's letter, 3) that during two visits he had made to Montreal, one in April, the other in August, he had discussed his trade union work with members of the majority leadership.

This expulsion is not that of a simple militant fallen into inactivity. The comrade in question has occupied at various times important positions in the youth and the section and he has been one of the leaders of the minority tendency since its beginning. Before this time his attitude toward the financing of the movement was beyond reproach, and his delay can be easily explained by his isolation in the Quebec north. His expulsion by administrative channels is a factional gesture serving as a warning to the entire minority.

To these precise measures we must add three other threats and actions. First, several comrades of the Montreal majority leadership have monocholantly commented to the effect that inquiries are being made into the possibility that certain Montreal comrades who were on vacation are implicated in the Atlantic provinces affair. This is a scarcely-veiled threat of suspension for these Montreal comrades.

Secondly, it has also been posed that Comrade Christine Leroux be withdrawn from the LJS because she (allegedly) broke the discipline of the section at the plenum of the EC of the YS/LJS. Again this is only a rumor conveyed by certain majority leaders.

Thirdly, an LJS comrade has been forced to sign a public rectification of an article she wrote in a nationalist magazine. No formal charge of having put forward a line contrary to that of the LJS was laid against her. The rectification bears only on the tone of the article and the emphasis put on different aspects of the women's liberation movement in the article. The rectification was not written by the comrade and she is not at all in agreement with its tone. Although this action is formally permissible within the framework of a very rigid definition of democratic centralism, it is not in the tradition of the Trotskyist movement to oblige a comrade to be the spokesperson for nuances in the line with which he is not in agreement.

You will understand, comrades, that in this context serious questions must be posed as to the possibility for us to develop our political positions with a view to a democratic discussion for the next world congress and for the next conventions of the section and the pan-Canadian youth organization. We ask you therefore to investigate the situation in the section and to make the interventions that you think necessary.

Be assured of our full collaboration and our Bolshevik-internationalist greetings.

Michel Mill for

Denis Lambert LSO Montreal  
Christine Leroux LSO Montreal  
Michel Mill LSO Montreal  
Leon Peillard LSO Montreal

Gilbert Rousseau expelled LSO Chibougamau

Terry Hamilton-Smith suspended LSA Fredericton  
Carole Wright suspended LSA Fredericton

Walter Davis suspended LSA Halifax  
Will Offley suspended LSA Halifax

cc: PC LSA/LSO, NC LSO

/Received in Toronto October 15, 1971 (via Brussels)

6. REPLY BY THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE TO THE MILL APPEAL

The following statement to the United Secretariat was adopted on October 30, 1971 by the LSA/LSO Political Committee.

Toronto  
October 30, 1971

These comments are in response to the request of the United Secretariat for our views on an appeal that it investigate the situation in the Canadian section and make the interventions it thinks necessary. The appeal is signed by the four members of the Montreal tendency, by G. R. [redacted], alleged to have been expelled recently, and four LSA/LSOers in the Maritimes, suspended August 31 but reinstated on October 17.

We first wish to note that despite the fact that this appeal is dated September 16 and marked "carbon copies sent to the Political Committee LSA/LSO and the National Committee LSO", we only became acquainted with it on October 15 thanks to receipt of a copy from the United Secretariat.

Comrade Mill is a member of the Central Committee of the LSA/LSO and comrade Leroux is a member of the Executive Council of the YS/LJE. The four Maritimes comrades participated in extensive hearings conducted by the Political Committee through two of its leading members over the October 9-11 weekend. Yet the leading bodies of the Canadian movement have at no time received any appeal of any type from either Mill or Leroux relevant to any of the matters now taken to the United Secretariat, nor was the Political Committee subcommittee informed in any way by the Maritimes comrades of their appeal or its character, although it would seem to be relevant to its inquiry.

We think this procedure, which completely bypasses, ignores, all the organizational forms of the Canadian section to hit right into the United Secretariat, is most unusual to say the least and makes it unnecessarily difficult for such a body to get a clear and balanced picture of the situation.

We would like to assure the United Secretariat that we heartily concur with comrade Mandel's exhortation that it is especially in a period of pre-world congress discussion when all sections' leaderships should bend over backwards to insure minority rights in their section and in the International. We believe that the Canadian section has a spotless record in this respect and that, as this incident will show, even upon the most cursory investigation, our record will continue to remain without a blemish.

Nonetheless we must record our objection to comrade Mandel's observation that the similarity of the allegations made by the Canadian minority against the Canadian leadership and by the British minority against the IMG leadership as to restriction of democratic minority rights is very striking. We question what purpose is served by such comments.

We hope that you do not think it necessary for us to answer all the allegations in the September 16 appeal. We hope that any uneasiness



that may have been caused by the unilateral September 16 appeal will be satisfactorily met by our comments on a few of them.

But before we comment on perhaps the more significant allegations in the appeal we would point out that many of them such as the comment "some of the members of the majority leadership demanded several times that they (Montreal tendency and Maritime members) present their differences in public" and the comment "scarcely veiled threats of suspension... by several comrades of the Montreal majority leadership" can only be considered unsubstantiated rumour and gossip.

First we must say that we are surprised by the paragraph which brings into question the procedures of our last convention. We recall that both comrades Krivine and Beauvais attended that convention and comrade Krivine reported to the United Secretariat his complete satisfaction with the procedures of that convention, particularly, as we recall, in relation to the rights of the tendency.

One of the features of this convention was its complete bilingual character through a simultaneous translation system. Not only did the tendency with its single delegate have equal time on every report and full representation on all bodies including the praesidium (through tendency supporters who did not qualify as delegates) but facilities of the convention were extended beyond all normal limits to make all minority documents available even though they arrived much later than the deadline. The executive secretary himself missed part of the convention to see to it personally that a last-minute document was circulated. A couple were retranslated and re-run after the convention and circulated throughout the League, unanswered to this day despite their highly contentious character.

It strikes us as odd to see that the authority of the control commission, which was not elected at that convention through oversight, is brought into question at this date when the previous one was confirmed in office without the slightest sign of dissent from anyone, including the minority representative on the Central Committee at the plenary session following the adjournment of the convention. Why the three-person commission happens to be composed only of majority comrades is clear -- what isn't clear is why this matter is raised to the attention of the United Secretariat.

There seems to us to be no substantial evidence of a "witch-hunt"-- of a "dissident-hunting" atmosphere -- in the Canadian section as alleged by those making the appeal.

For instance -- the case of Gilbert R of C  
Comrade R was not expelled as the appeal claims but rather dropped from membership without political prejudice, by a procedure normal in all LSA/LSO branches. Article III, Section I of the LSA/LSO constitution specifies that all members must engage in the League's work. Article VII, Section I defines monthly dues of all members as 50 cents, and Article VII, Section 5 states that "members six months in arrears (in payment of dues) shall be stricken from the rolls".

By August last R was eight months in arrears in payment of dues. Further, he had had no contact with the Montreal centre since April and had not responded to any correspondence. R



was informed by the national organizer when he was passing through Montreal that if he did not pay up his dues in two weeks he would be dropped from membership. Three weeks later when it was reported that he had not paid dues, the National Committee dropped him from membership without prejudice.

Is it in any way "a warning to the entire minority"? If it is, the message would appear to be a very simple one that no loyal member could take exception to -- it is to tell them that the constitution of the League is to be respected by them as by all other members of the League and that they should meet minimal financial obligations to the movement as required by the constitution.

As for what is an even more serious charge in our opinion -- that the minority "has gradually been relieved of all its work areas". This seems to appear in the appeal almost in passing, with no particulars and no examples cited. It seems to us impossible to believe that the appeal is referring to the "Argentine affair", known in the Canadian section as the "Liberation boycott", but apparently it does. This incidently involved more than two comrades of the Montreal LJS but the entire minority including comrade Mill. This matter is documented in the Statements and Reports of the Summer 1971 Plenum of the LSA/LSO.

On June 13 the minority tendency stated that it was boycotting the French language organ of the LSA/LSO -- a boycott which covered writing for it, helping produce it, sell it, or doing any routine work related to it in any way.

It is our opinion that the boycott of the press of a section is a violation of the most elementary discipline and a repudiation of the movement itself and constitutes a terrible provocation of the leadership of a section. The minority attempted to justify its boycott by transcending its responsibilities to the section in which it holds membership. It cloaked its boycott of the press of the Canadian section with the authority of the Fourth International itself. It declared that it would continue its boycott until it had consulted with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

It was when comrade Mill stated to the plenum that he never got a reply from the United Secretariat -- not an official one, that comrade Dowson wrote his letter of September 7 asking comrade Mandel if he could throw any light on this matter.

The appeal now before the United Secretariat for consideration states that the minority's final resignation from the editorial board of Liberation should have served to "prevent the leadership of the YS/LJS from censuring the boycotters." -- as if the resignations made the boycotts excusable. The Central Committee of the LSA/LSO in its plenary session endorsed the action of the Quebec National Committee "to drop comrade Michel Mill from the editorial board of Liberation as a statement of our view of his resignation from the editorial board".

And far from relieving them from this area of work, as the Canadian leadership has been alleged to have been systematically doing, an area of work which they themselves first boycotted and then resigned from, it instructed "the minority tendency to commence loyal and consistent work to support and circulate our publications."

From the appeal one would conclude that disciplinary actions of a far-reaching character are taking place right across the Canadian section -- the appeal refers to "another discipline matter which had nothing to do with the Quebec or the Atlantic provinces." Who it had to do with and with what -- and what the disciplinary action was -- we are not told! We are only told, it is alleged that a leader of the YS/LJS said "We don't need any proof. You must have confidence in the leadership."

It is unfortunate to see this version of what was first alleged by comrade L again repeated in an appeal to the United Secretariat. It would of course be damning if the leadership of the Canadian section held the view attributed to it -- that disciplinary actions can be taken against members of the section without any proof.

But to get to the truth it might first be best to say a few words on what the whole thing is about. The recent youth plenum was called upon to approve of the recent suspension of several Toronto members who had been proven to the satisfaction of almost the entire local to have been violating, despite repeated warnings, the movement's well known and unequivocal ban on the use of illegal drugs. To demand that the plenum hear "proof", hear the evidence, was to demand that the plenum itself hold a trial and render its own verdict, that it annul or reject the trial already held by the Toronto local. The Y S leader referred to said to the satisfaction of almost everyone there, but not, it appears, to the satisfaction of the minority, that "We don't need to hear the evidence" because a trial has already been held where the evidence had already been heard in full and tested in full.

The youth leadership presented a motion asking that the plenum "show confidence in the leadership" by upholding the trial conducted by the Toronto leadership and supported by an overwhelming majority of the Toronto local. All the delegates to the plenum endorsed the action -- except for two supporters of the Montreal tendency. They abstained. Why did they abstain? Because of what they persist in alleging a youth leader said?

With regard to the allegation that an LJS comrade was "forced to sign a public rectification of an article she wrote in a nationalist magazine." If the rectification (correction) dealt "only on the tone of the article and the emphasis put on different aspects of the women's liberation movement in the article" it would have in our opinion also been "a very rigid definition of democratic centralism" (even though the comrade appealing to the United Secretariat think it "formally permissible") -- "to oblige a comrade to be the spokesperson for nuances in the line with which she is not in agreement."

However, more than tone was involved. The headline over the article read "Neither Male Chauvanism nor Feminism" thereby falsifying the position of the LJS and the Canadian section to which the article was attributed. We give complete support to and identification with feminism.

Furthermore, the article contained a regrettable factional attack on a women's liberation group which even worse was based on misrepresentation of its position and a slur that it was linked up to the

terrorist FLQ in its thinking. This had grave immediate consequences for us -- for one thing we were banned from use of the facilities of the main women's centre in Montreal.

The article was contrary in its content to the motion adopted by the women's liberation fraction. The comrade submitted the article without making the changes agreed to in discussion with the comrade who had been struck off to edit the article with her.

Why was this comrade asked to put her name to the correction? Certainly not to humiliate her. To have submitted the correction in the name of the movement, or of a known spokesperson of the movement, would have been a repudiation of the comrade. The correction was a routine presentation of the movement's basic position which was edited for style by the comrade.

One last point which we must comment on -- the suspension of the two LSA/LSO comrades in Halifax and the two in Fredericton by the Political Committee of the LSA/LSO, and the suspension of the Halifax and Fredericton YS/LJS locals (of which they are the leading members) by the CEC of the YS/LJS on August 31 and September 1.

While the action of the PC and the CEC was unusual, the situation was unusual. The PC has just written a lengthy report for circulation through the Canadian section. We will attempt to summarize the salient points.

These actions were certainly not of a factional character as the appeal claims but in defense of the movement. They were of an emergency character, of a temporary nature. Shortly after the plenum, the PC became acquainted with certain information and, in the light of other developments, concluded that it did not know where the four Maritime comrades, who were leaders of the two YS/LJS locals, were headed. It felt that decisions of the gravest implications to the work of the entire movement were being taken behind the back of the movement and that the movement could no longer assume any responsibility for the actions of these comrades.

It called for an immediate investigation. And, so that this could take place with the full authority of the movement and as impartially as possible, it turned the investigation over to the control commission. It was not a trial, with evidence, etc. There were no charges laid. There was to be an investigation - by the control commission - of certain information that had come to the PC's attention. The Fredericton comrades did not reply to any communications from the date of suspension August 31 to September 30, and the Halifax comrades refused to answer the control commission with respect to any of the information that was the basis of its enquiry.

With this defiance of the control commission blocking any investigation, the PC decided to lay a charge of gross disloyalty on September 30 and presented evidence to back up the charge. Without going into all the details, in our opinion, a communication that we finally received from the leading Fredericton comrade endorsed by the Fredericton YS executive after the laying of the charge alone fully justifies the emergency action taken by the PC.

The document is titled "NDP report passed by the YS executive September 28 to be introduced to the YS local October 2." It commences: "For about nine months we have directed our NDP work towards building the Waffle (a loose left formation in Canada's labor party formation -RD) in preparation for a decisive conflict with the right wing. This decisive conflict is underway. It began at the NDP convention Sept. 25 and will end when the convention reconvenes on October 16." The report noted that a leading YS/LJS member took part in writing the Waffle Manifesto, another wrote the women's rights resolution and T. H wrote the labor resolution.

This line is a clear violation of our entire orientation to the NDP, not only as outlined by our last convention but redefined at our recent planum, and validates the fears that Comrade Dowson expressed in his correspondence to Terry H back in July which went unanswered.

The September 25 convention of the tiny and isolated New Brunswick NDP adopted by a marginal vote a whole series of infantile ultra-left resolutions which resulted in a walk-out of the trade union leadership and a de facto split.

The Political Bureau instructed the editors of Labor Challenge to make a public dissociation of our movement from the ultra-left line of the resolutions and any strategy of decisive conflict at this time with the right wing. This appeared in the Oct. 11 issue of Labor Challenge - Walkout breaks up NDP convention, by P. Kent. October 16 saw the NDP provincial council meet, and with the approval of the federal leadership adjourn after calling for a convention on Nov. 27. The ultra-left went through the motions of electing new officers and thus consummated the split.

While the Fredericton comrades expressed their disagreement with the line expressed in the Kent article, and held to their position outlined in their Sept. 28 YS executive report, they agreed to implement it. At the time of this writing, some two weeks following the split, we have heard no word from the Fredericton comrades about the October 16 developments, either on their role or their opinion of its significance.

There is substantial evidence that widening circles of the Canadian left believe that the Trotskyists engineered the split in the New Brunswick NDP. The Fredericton Sept. 28 report would tend to substantiate this belief. As this affects our work right across the country, we will be compelled to make further public comments on this development.

Our work in the Maritimes has been severely handicapped, not only by the vast distance separating these comrades from the centre, but by the absence of an experienced Trotskyist cadre there. It has been further complicated by the development of what is in effect an undeclared tendency headed by the four League comrades, without clearly defined views, which has encompassed the two Maritime youth locals. We were interested to learn in the appeal to you that the Maritimes comrades "are presently discussing the possibility of forming a united tendency (with the Montreal tendency). . ."

The appeal ends with a summary statement that "in this context serious questions must be posed as to the possibility for us to develop our political positions with a view to a democratic discussion for the next world congress and for the next conventions of the section and the



pan-Canadian youth organization."

We assure you -- these fears are quite groundless. In fact that is just what the Montreal tendency has failed to do -- to make known in a frank and open way as any loyal tendency must do, just what its political views are. See Dowson's report to the Plenum for their views at the time of the last convention. Early this spring the PC opened the internal discussion in the Canadian section. The Montreal tendency has contributed nothing. Comrade Mill's contribution to the plenum following Dowson's report was not handed in in written form. While Mill promised the manuscript within a couple of weeks, it has never arrived at the centre. Finally in order to make it possible for the entire movement to be in some way acquainted with what the views of this tendency are, two months following the plenum -- the central office has transcribed Comrade Mill's speech from the tape of the plenum sessions and sent it to him for any stylistic changes for publication not later than November 14.

We hope that this information deals adequately with the major points raised in the appeal that has been addressed to you. Should you wish information on those points that we have touched upon or material on those that we have skipped over, we would be pleased to supply it.

Comradely,

Ross Dowson  
for the Political Committee  
of the LSO/LSO

# League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière

## Discussion Bulletin 1972

### Contents

#### DOCUMENTS ON THE OFFLEY-DAVIS APPEAL

--submitted by the Political Committee

1. Political Committee Motion, August 31, 1971
2. Appeal by M. Mill, et al., to the United Secretariat, Sept 16, 1971
3. Letter from Ernest Mandel to Ross Dowson, Sept. 29, 1971
4. Statement of Will Offley and Walter Davis to the Political Committee, Oct. 10, 1971
5. Letter of Ross Dowson to Walter Davis and Will Offley, Oct. 26, 1971
6. Reply by the Political Committee to the Mill Appeal to the United Secretariat, Oct. 30, 1971 (D. R. D. - ed.)
7. Report by the Political Committee on the Maritimes suspensions
8. Findings of the Political Committee, Nov. 15, 1971
9. Letter of the United Secretariat to M. Mill, Jan 22, 1972
10. Appeal of Will Offley and Walter Davis to the Central Committee Plenum of March 31, and April 1-2, 1972
11. Plenum Decision on the Offley-Davis appeal
12. Appeal of Walter Davis and Will Offley to the Convention

APPENDIX: Correspondence, listed in item 12.

Number 15

Price: \$1.50

November, 1972