

[Excerpt from Letter from
Russell Johnson, SAL, New Zealand]

xs: PC,NFO

May 16, 1978

Dear Mary-Alice,

Your "Leading the Party Into Industry" bulletin also arrived here last week. Could you please arrange to have 4 more copies of it airmailed to us urgently. We are having a conference of our trade union comrades at the beginning of June and I would like to get your reports into the hands of the key comrades in this work prior to the gathering.

Actually I am really writing to tell you how much your bulletin inspired us. In fact I got so excited as I got into Jack's report that I read it in a sort of a dance around the room. You see, just a few days previous (May 6-7) we had an NC plenum the focus of which was the need to push our "proletarianisation" process forward, what this meant in terms of our immediate tasks, and the organisational problems that are proving obstacles to our pushing forward with our "turn." While your material is of course more rounded and draws the necessary conclusions without our hesitations, we were nevertheless quite surprised at the extent that our thinking process has paralleled yours in the face of very similar general problems. We also put the stress on getting every available comrade into industry and recognised that the key to doing this and push the work forward is to free up a layer of central comrades to take the lead. Financial considerations have helped us make the decision to free up a sizeable section of our NC from full-time party assignments to get into this work.

Our National Executive will be discussing out your material quite systematically and think out the implications for our work.

While its still only a small layer of our comrades who have got into our industrial work so far, they are really starting to generate some enthusiasm and results. We have made some modest recruitment gains and had a significant impact among a relatively large layer of union militants, including even some in the Communist Party. Our paper has been central to this--the Stalinist press has a very narrow circulation leaving us almost an open field in this key area. The temptation to try and leap over our very limited resources in this sort of exciting situation is always there. In a lot of respects I feel that what we are doing in NZ at the present time is a model of what a small Trotskyist party can achieve if they adopt a clear set of priorities, push steadily ahead, and don't hang around waiting for someone to devise a means of making a "quick breakthrough."

We heard a rumour that you might be visiting the Antipodes this year. It's a nice thought, but I don't believe it. As a result of the re-organisation that's taken place in our national office this year there's a good chance we may get overseas ourselves this year. We need that sort of stimulus.

Comradely regards, s/Russell