

July 12, 1985

Dear John,

On behalf of the REB which voted to accept you as a member at large, I would like to welcome you into membership in News and Letters Committees. As you can see from the Letter of the Week that I have just sent to all the locals, we feel confident that you will also succeed in creating a local in Kansas. And we are all looking forward to seeing you at the Plenum we are having over Labor Day weekend. This is the point I want to develop further.

I know of no other Marxist organization that still follows what the feeling was about breaking down all divisions, not only as against capitalism, but leadership and ranks and the length of discussions during pre-convention period when Perspectives were worked out. And even the Russian Revolution, since it too was hampered by the concept of the Blitist party that made no distinction between plenums and conventions, and even between members and non-members, did not really practice ending the greatest division of capitalism, the division between mental and manual labor. In a word you will be having a tremendous adventure by attending this Marxist-Humanist Plenum.

First, you will receive, in addition to what is here enclosed, the Draft Perspectives which will be the center of discussions at the plenum and will appear in the next issue of N&L. Secondly, from now on you will be getting weekly Dear Friends Letters from the Center, as well as minutes of the REB. Thirdly, the first discussion bulletin has already been published and I will see that it is sent to you. There will be other discussion bulletins to which you can contribute, till the middle of August, at which point if you haven't written but still wish to make a contribution before Labor Day when the Perspectives is given, you can bring it with you and it will be distributed to the membership. I will see that the Call to the Plenum which has the reports to the Plenum is sent to you. Also enclosed is the special supplement we had when I spoke at WSU Labor Archives which has the Raya Dunayevskaya collection on deposit. With it is a report of the exhibit ~~about~~ itself which had continued for several months after the talk. Do you know that all my archives are available on micro-film, are quite reasonable (\$60) and quite a few universities have them. Can you get your university to order it? Do inform us what you want your donation to be; all that is "required" is a \$1 a week which is ridiculous. The rest is voluntary donations. And we take for granted people give what they can for Marxist-Humanism. Please let us know what size bundle of N&L you would like to be responsible for each issue.

Now I would like to add what Kansas means to me. What John Brown's "Bloody Kansas" has always meant to me, the true beginnings of the indigeness of humanism in this country. What I always use to stress was what a philosophy of freedom achieves both in a vision for all humanity and totally new human relations even within one's own group. Take the question of Abolitionism. They were pacifists, but there was not a single one of them who did not consider that John Brown was not only a leader of abolitionism and the bravest of them all, but had opened a totally new chapter for freedom with his martyrdom. Marx went a step further than martyrdom. He said ~~and~~ the John Brown's attack

16663

at Harper's Ferry opened a new chapter not alone for freedom in the United States, but for the world. Indeed, his development of his philosophy of revolution, of that Marx called "the new Humanism" that was so profoundly developed in economics, in politics, in all fields from art to the specific internationalism of national revolutionary movements, hung on that critical period of the 1860s and 1870s as he singled out the Civil War in the United States and the Paris Commune in France as the two highest points of self-liberation and the masses being both revolutionary force and reason. I had cast the whole history of the United States from slavery days to the 1960s first and then brought it recently with a new 1985 Introduction of American Civilization on Trial, precisely on the indigenous roots of Marxism in the United States and its world Humanist concepts, and called the final decade of Marx (1873-1883) a trail to the 1980s.

Where Kansas comes in again, and that part also seems to be little known is that the original organizers of Communism -- I am referring to the fact when the Socialist Party split in two once the Russian Revolution occurred -- and who were to later be the first Trotskyists came from Kansas. James Patrick Cannon was proud of only two things in his life (perhaps I should have said should have been proud of only two things in his life) and that is having been an IWW member, and having come from Kansas. A slightly more almost todayish incident was one that I experienced sometime directly after WW II, was coming to Kansas City and not finding a trace of all I was looking for of either the 19th or early 20th centuries. Nevertheless some church because it had some youth who were interested did make a little meeting for me. But, what really brought home how people have forgotten all the industrial and Black dimension present was in the sixties when I returned from my trip to Africa, from the Gambia, and brought back a youth who had won some sort of scholarship to the university in Kansas. It was such a reactionary family that he had to stay with, that ~~the~~ practically put me through an interrogation process, asking such questions as what was a white woman like me doing in the Gambia? Was I a Red? etc, etc. The poor young man did not wish to give up the privilege of getting an education. You should really read some of his articles both in the Gambia and from Kansas. Come to Chicago and you will be able to see it in the bound volume for those years.

Finally, you couldn't have been more in tune with what we are concerned with now, whether this we in relationship to N&L or the whole question of reification and time as we keep contrasting what time is to the capitalist exploitative system as "socially necessary labor time" and the way time is defined as Marx as "space for human self-development."

Your,

16664