

# DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 9 OF 16

FOLDER 5

MCLL REUNIFICATION  
PROPOSALS 1972

The Motor City Labor League reaffirms the position shared by Sheila, Nancy, Frank and Jack at their Tuesday, Sept. 19 meeting that a superficial reunification of the present divisions within MCLL is not in the best interests of anyone. We do not need a coalition in the name of reunification. We do need to continue the process of building a pre-party democratic centralist organization begun two years ago and accelerated as a result of this crisis.

The present crisis emerges out of long submerged political, personal and power conflicts within the organization. It is the result in part of the underdevelopment of the process of criticism and self-criticism which allowed them to fester and the secret ballot central committee election which forced them to the surface.

I. To determine whether the differences are irreconcilable or not, as well as to illuminate the original differences we think it essential to examine the behavior of the two sides since the walkout of Sept. 2nd occurred. Who has cooperated in the carrying out of external work since Sept. 2nd and who has not? In short, who has sought the best interests of the entire organization and who has not?

In support of our concrete unification proposal, we present the following facts:

A. ON COOPERATION IN EXTERNAL WORK.

1. MCLL cooperated in the following ways:

a. When Nancy Woodside called Sheila Murphy on Sept. 8th to request a meeting with her, Sheila replied by saying that she had assumed that Nancy was calling to cancel Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden as speakers at the first CCC session. To the contrary, Jane and Tom and Holly Near appeared. Their presence, together with the advance publicity in the Free Press and elsewhere made it necessary to turn people away at the door. It contributed to the establishment of a respectable CCC III enrollment as well as a substantial amount to the CCC treasury.

b. On its own initiative, MCLL, not without difficulty persuaded Jane to make time available for a Ravitz fund raiser which raised \$850.00 and brought the campaign out of the red.

c. Members of MCLL fulfilled all our responsibilities vis-a-vis CCC including work on the Journey, making our dark room available for photo work on it, participating in setting up Central Methodist Church for the session, attending the GS preparation meeting and serving as table leaders for the session.

d. MCLL turned over to Justin Ravitz, at his request, on Sept. 4 the election results which were in our possession and on Sept. 12 some maps and other data that was in our possession. MCLL members attended the Sept. 18 Ravitz meeting, even though the months of preparation by RAAG for the meeting was not utilized or reflected in the format, although a contribution from RAAG to the meeting was acknowledged.

e. John Taylor was asked by Jack on Sept. 10 to help procure a union hall for the CCC organizers training program. He did in fact arrange for CCC to be able to use Local 212 and was informed on Sept. 20 that Sheila was pursuing Local 26 instead.

2. On the other hand:

a. Although Buck Davis spoke to Justin Ravitz about the matter on Sept. 3rd or 4th we never received any communication concerning the whereabouts of the typesetting equipment, or its ownership/leaseship by MCLL; or its availability to us for work we might need to do.

b. Very strenuous effort was necessary to get the CCC mailing list for a mailing about the Belle Isle fund raiser. Equally strenuous efforts to get the Ravitz mailing list for the same purpose proved futile.

c. Although Frank Joyce, encouraged Jordan Rossen to attend a campaign staff meeting, when Jordan coincidentally called him at home on the morning of Sept. 3rd and although RAAG cadre appeared, at the appropriate time and place, the noontime Sept. 3rd Ravitz Campaign meeting was cancelled.

d. At no time did the extraordinary work, created by the Indo-China Peace Campaign, receive offers of any form of assistance from any member of the Murphy collective. Only Sheila attended a single IPC event in the Detroit area, other than CCC or the Ravitz fund raiser. The external implications of this are symbolized by Gwen Roberts' remark to

Rita Valenti,, after Sheila left: "Is Sheila still here?" Rita's reply was, "No, I think she's left." "That's too bad," said Gwen, "I wanted to ask her why we always go to their things and they never come to ours."

e. Prior to September 2, the entire Beech Street complex, that is, Buck, Camilla, Karen, and Sam, agreed to hold a Ravitz fund raiser on September 23. When the leaflet appeared from the Ravitz office on September 14, only Sam's name and address appeared.

f. Within CCC, Bruce Ewen was excluded from the Finance Committee and Nancy Woodside and Bruce Ewen were excluded from the training committee.

g. At the September 19 Women's Book Club Steering Committee meeting, Sheila and Margaret took a position in opposition to the addition of Brenda Reeber and/or Valerie Snook and/or Barbara Krickbaum for the Steering Committee. They did suggest that it was important for a woman from the National Lawyers Guild to be represented on the Steering Committee.

h. On September 2, Frank Joyce removed some personal items from the Ravitz campaign office. Subsequently, his name was removed from the bulletin board, a letter marked "Personal" sent to him by Jordan Rossen (which we believe to have arrived there on August 31) has never been delivered to him, and a lock on the door changed so as to render his key inoperable.

In part, doubtless as a result of these actions, questions began to be raised by non-MCLL members about the relationship of some MCLL cadre to the campaign.

On Wednesday, September 13, and again on Thursday, September 14, Sheila raised in conversations with Frank and Buck, respectively, the desire for a clarification from MCLL as to its relation to the campaign. A letter on this subject was hand-delivered to Sheila at the Fonda-Ravitz fundraiser on Saturday afternoon. The letter advised that MCLL members would attend the September 18 meeting, set forth a provisional post-reunification position on the campaign and took advantage of the letter to

advise, apparently unclearly, that MCLL did not intend at that time to write any subsequent papers on the crisis. The letter was subsequently cited, for reasons we still fail to comprehend, as "arrogant" and thus a reason why a private meeting Sheila had proposed involving Frank, herself, and Nancy should not take place. The other reason given was the paranoid fabrication that an as-yet-to-be-identified MCLL member (alleged at that time to be Michael Smith) had alleged Bill King to be an agent.

i. At the Tuesday, September 12 CCC session no projection from the podium whatsoever was made of either MCLL or the Alliance, who are sponsors of the program. This was accomplished even though Jack gave what he purported to be a capsule history of the evolution of CCC. No one, including Justin and Frank, was even identified as an MCLL member. Sheila, in announcing a forthcoming PACT program at which many people, including Frank Joyce, would speak, identified him not as an MCLL member but rather as "from CCC".

j. Prior to September 2, [redacted] had spoken with Bill King about possibility of LDC assistance regarding a case in which a v [redacted] was beaten in welfare offices which later was reported in both the Free Press and the News. No response was ever received despite an inquiry by [redacted] at the September 10 CCC General Staff meeting.

k. On August 24, JT, Kevin Murphy and Bill Bunting met with Sam Stark and Mona Rothschild to discuss possible input to a forthcoming conference in Cincinnati to reactivate the Urban Affairs Council of the Council for Southern Mountains. On September 6, JT called Kevin to inquire about a follow-up meeting that had been set for September 7 and was informed by Kevin that JT would have to carry on the follow-through without Kevin's participation. Although Kevin remained friendly to Bill Bunting following Bill's post-September 2 return to Detroit, none of the joint work in which they had been engaged went forward.

It is true that public acknowledgment was given to IPC and the Peace

Treaty at CCC and at the Ravitz fund-raiser. It is also true that public acknowledgment was given RAAG at the September 18 Ravitz meeting and that the Peace Treaty's and CCC's activity at the State Fair was covered in a story in the Journey. Public acknowledgment, however, is far different from concrete actual co-operation in external work.

#### B. PERSONAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONS:

1. Nancy Woodside, after Sept. 2, continued to pursue and on Sept. 8, delivered to Sheila information about a possible apartment for which Sheila had been urgently searching.

2. Following the tense Sept. 11 General Staff meeting of CCC, Frank Joyce was leaving and found upon arriving at the door to the church parking lot that Sheila was close behind. He held the door and asked Sheila how she was doing. She replied, in her iciest tones, "I have nothing whatsoever to say to you." That remark, she said later in a private meeting with Nancy, was a "test" apparently of whether Frank would make an issue of the remark. He did not do so at the time, merely reporting it matter-of-factly to a few people in the context of a report of the general mood. It is not a particularly surprising thing for Sheila to have said. It is an issue now for what it symbolizes about the entire process since Sept. 2nd.

3. A letter, over the signature of Justin Ravitz, was sent to Buck Davis, a comrade with years of shared practice, BY REGISTERED MAIL. The content of the letter was pretentious and contemptuous in that it outlined a procedural schedule for an exchange of papers which implied that we should or would wait for them to write a paper to which we would respond as opposed to simultaneously writing a statement of our position as had been agreed upon at the Sept. 2nd GM meeting.

4. The Murphy collective in both its oral and written communications has characterized members of MCLL as "punks," "chickenshits," abject failures, etc. MCLL has never so characterized members of that collective. Indeed, the Central Committee report of Sept. 2 says: "Even though one of our comrade's political integrity has been explicitly impugned, we continue to accept Jack and Sheila as political comrades with whom we wish to continue struggle. We believe that both of them, along with us, have contributed enormously to the development of the organization to its present unparalleled power and practice." (CC report, pg.7) The same document states further: "We believe the organization can, admittedly with

difficulty, stay together. We respect the talent, skill, leadership, experience, insight, power and commitment of Sheila and her closest political allies." (CC report, pg. 8)

No such statements have ever appeared in any of the verbal or written statements of which we are presently aware, coming from the Murphy collective. Jack Russell did say in the Sept. 19th meeting between Sheila, Nancy, Frank and himself that he "didn't consider Frank's motives to be completely ignoble" and that he did not believe him ". . . to be completely trashed as a political animal."

C. Unity and Construction versus strife and destruction:

As the Central Committee report and our paper "Struggle Within" makes clear, the objective of MCLL and its leadership was to strive for unity while struggling around the personal, power and political conflicts which had arisen. The following are additional quotes from those papers:

"We believe that every part of the organization . . . contributes and will contribute to the common interest of organizing and leading our class to victory." (CC report p. 7) And "We believe that the leadership of the organization should be shared and the membership's wishes respected even if comrades are simultaneously struggled against as liberal, non-struggle and under-developed as indeed, recent events have shown our own to be. We are fully prepared to accept if necessary, that the divisions around methods of internal work are so severe that a split is necessary. We would all be the losers. . ." (CC report p. 7&8).

And "We believe that we are proceeding from unity through struggle to unity. The class overcomes its divisions because it must in order to defeat the bourgeoisie. MCLL needs itself and the struggle needs MCLL. We are acutely aware of how all of the programs of the organization have suffered as a result of the present division. It is clear that a higher level of unity, resolving many long submerged conflicts within the organization is both necessary and possible." (Struggle Within p.1)

Our paper "Struggle Within" is a political discussion of under-developed techniques and political issues within the organization. The Murphy Collective's paper promises politics later--and that we suspect was an afterthought--and dwells on personalities and speculation about their motives. It proposes no direction or solution for the future. It concentrates almost exclusively on procedural rather than substantive errors. It never seeks to relate its allegations to a historical or contemporary perspective on what is necessary to defeat the ruling class and achieve socialism. It is full of uncomradely distortions, innuendo, mis-representations, lies contempt and deceit as follows:

1. The Murphy Collective Paper:

The problem with the "factual analysis" presented by the Murphy collective is that there are not enough facts and very little analysis. The paper is permeated with a tone of contempt for the people it is directed against, a tone characterized by familiar and colloquial terms, by false statements, by innuendo and by misleading characterizations of events and statements.

False and misleading statements are in themselves contemptuous but in this instance they are also typical of the contempt for the MCLL membership which has pervaded many of the Murphy collective's actions throughout this entire episode. For example, we find the statement on Page 3, paragraph 23, that "Frank proceeded to play-



off of your....discomfort at not having struggled with Sheila" extremely contemptuous and objectionable. The implication is that Frank manipulated a membership already enervated and biased by its cowardly failure to struggle with Sheila. We totally reject the assertion that MCLL cadre were merely the willing tools of Frank and Valerie. The organization was faced with a crisis precipitated by the arrogant and contemptuous resignations of two Central Committee members. Faced with a crisis, and realizing there was still a functioning Central Committee and a functioning organization, members took appropriate political action. We attended an emergency meeting to deal with a dangerously divisive crisis and when we discovered the facts, we organized to face the crisis and hold the organization together. This was a correct political response to a political emergency and we refuse to apologize for it. We also refuse to accept the characterization of our actions as either those of intimidated, misled and manipulated ciphers or as unprincipled "vultures" determined to take cowardly revenge on a single comrade regardless of the merits of the case. These kinds of characterizations, which comprise much of the substance and thrust of the Murphy collective's paper; demonstrate a deep political contempt and mistrust of MCLL membership, which we contend derives wholly from a style of political leadership based on incorrect political principles.

It is this contempt for MCLL members and MCLL processes which we find so distressing and which we hope this internal struggle will solve.

In the remainder of this section of our reunification proposal we will specifically demonstrate and illustrate the false and misleading nature of many of the statements contained in the Murphy collective's factual "analysis/" We will quote from their paper wherever possible and will also refer to specific page and paragraph numbers as an aid to comprehension.

Page 1, para. 3

It is incorrect to say "there was no Murphy bloc prior to the convention". There has always been a Murphy grouping from the earliest days of MCLL. There has always been a grouping of people around Sheila who share a common history of struggle in Detroit, who live in close proximity to one another, and who function closely together in meetings and in other organizational activities. To ignore this is to ignore history. We do not deny the importance and value of personal loyalties among revolutionary comrades, but we feel such loyalties have important limitations which must be always observed and never exceeded:

Leadership must struggle with each other and with cadre toward political as well as personal loyalty. As the party is built and the struggle intensifies, there will be casualties and too personal a loyalty becomes a burden. Excessively personal loyalty strains comradeship which must be based on shared political objectives. As the struggle intensifies, we will increasingly find ourselves working with people we do not know closely, but whom we must trust. Intense personal loyalty can, will, and should exist. It must not, however, be used, especially by leaders, as a standard of greater political comradeship." (Struggle Within, page 10)

Page 1, para. 3

Frank did not ask Brian to speak to Sheila about their discussion of "how to get Jack off CC". Brian took this initiative himself.

Page 1, para. 5

Frank did not tell Justin that "as a matter of fact" a second Murphy Collective meeting took place August 28.

Page 2, para. 10,11,12

The Murphy Collective's statement of the process of criticism and self-criticism which took place in the August 28 RAAG is a prototypical, indeed a stereotypical, statement of the underdevelopment and abuse of this fundamentally important revolutionary process in MCLL prior to the present crisis. We believe we now have a better understanding of the proper use and function of criticism and self-criticism in a democratic centralist organization. We believe that our paper, "Struggle Within", is a clear statement of our conception of the correct use of criticism and self-criticism. And we are certain that taking comrades "to task" is no part of that process. Yes, Lynda Ann, Pat and Jim accepted the harsh (not "hard") criticisms of the campaign staff, but this is only another example of organizational failure in criticism and self-criticism. The criticisms

were accepted under incorrect criteria and no attempt was made by the campaign staff to struggle with the difficult problems that RAAG was encountering in the development of its work process. The result was, and is, continuing tension and hostility between RAAG and the campaign staff. In other words, criticism and self-criticism as practised on August 28 was a complete political failure. Yet the Murphy Collective self-righteously speaks of this episode as vindication of their "correct" practise.

Page 2, para. 12

We agree that few "have worked as hard for us as BP". Our question is who is the "us" referred to? Is "us" MCLL or is it the Murphy Collective? We raise the question because we believe departmentalism and possessiveness of work is counter-revolutionary practise which has been common in MCLL. All will surely agree that failure to maximize the work of each cadre has been and is an important and serious organizational criticism. We are also certain that there are many in MCLL who have worked as hard for the organization as Brian Flanigan--a compliment to them and to Brian.

Leadership is not possessive; its skills, insights and talents are the property of the class and organization or party. It assumes that the process by which others acquire the skills of the leaders is a part of the process which is necessary to growth and expansion. (Struggle Within, page 9)

Page 2, para. 14

Frank Joyce has accepted the criticism that he failed to question Sheila regarding her early and unexplained exit from the Thursday Central Committee meeting. We point out that Sheila voluntarily criticized herself on that point during the September 3 General Staff meeting. This is a past and non-substantive matter and we cannot understand why it is mentioned by the Murphy Collective unless as a part of a smokescreen of false and misleading innuendo.

Page 2, para. 16

It is misleading and false to state that Jack did not "focus organizational problems on the one absent CC member". Jack initiated the Thursday afternoon discussions of "divisions and tensions" in MCLL and, indeed, pressed for them. Are we to believe that Jack did not realize that this

discussion would inevitably concern itself with Sheila Murphy? It is ahistorical and myopic, to say the very least, to contend that such a discussion could occur without mentioning one of the strongest, most forthright, and, by her own admission, one of the most contentious members of MCLL?

Page 2, footnote 2

We totally reject the characterization of Ron Glotta's practise as campaign treasurer as an "abject failure". The facts refute the assertion. The fact is over \$6,200 was raised during the six weeks prior to the Primary election while Ron was treasurer, a little over \$1,000 a week. Ron resigned as treasurer on August 10, 1972 after Sheila characterized his performance as "barely adequate". The fact is that from August 10 to August 30 the campaign deposited \$125 in the bank. And the fact is that Jane Fonda raised around \$850 for the campaign and without that money Ravitz for Recorders Court Judge would be virtually penniless.

Page 3, para. 18

We do not understand Valerie's statement to Sheila on the telephone to have been "conscious and deliberate lies" and disagree with that characterization of them. We believe Valerie's conduct to have been that of an individual intimidated and confused by a prior history (shared by many) of "locks" or threats of "locks" by Sheila and other members of the Murphy Collective. We severely criticize Valerie for this non-struggle and non-exemplary leadership, but we do not feel it is grounds for expulsion from the CC, or taken by itself in historical organizational practise, even grounds for censure.

Page 3, para. 19

It is false and it is misleading to say that Valerie's statement regarding her phone conversation with Sheila "did not begin to suggest the full nature of Valerie's lies to Sheila." The truth is that Valerie did inform the entire Central Committee, including Jack Russell, of the substance of the conversation. It is therefore not true that Jack did not learn the true nature of the conversation until later that night in a conversation with Sheila. Jack Russell knew the truth all along and has apparently concealed it from the Murphy collective.

Page 3, para. 20

The misleading impression is given that Valerie's question "Well what are going to do about this?" referred to the CC discussion of "divisions and tensions", and that Jack Russell forthrightly stated he would not participate in a discussion centered on Sheila. Valerie, in fact, was referring to her phone conversation with Sheila. A call to Sheila at that point by any of the five CC members present informing her that a meeting was taking place would have been the appropriate political response. No one, including Jack Russell, made the phone call, and it is for this serious abdication of leadership responsibility that we censure all the CC.

Page 3 para. 23

We object to the characterization of the CC report as the "Joyce paper". and to such phrases (referring to Frank) as "he writes" and "his paper". The report was collectively formulated, discussed and read to the CC.

Page 3 para. 24

We disagree, that Jack "made it immediately clear that he was not part of any group which was going to collectively deal with Sheila." Does Jack feel that as self-styled "intermediary" to Sheila from the rest of the CC he was not necessarily part of the "group"? If he wasn't part of the group why did he stay and participate in the discussions? And if he did not see himself as part of the "group" then we assert that his taking on the role of "intermediary" was a cowardly act of self-insulation from political struggle.

In any event, what is the political objection to any group "collectively dealing" with any individual if the motives and practice are politically correct? We can see none. It is misleading to imply that such a course of action is somehow wrong.

Page 4 para. 25

It is true that Frank has retracted portions of his criticism of the maneuverings of the Murphy collective around the CC election. It is also true that Frank has never retracted his main criticisms of their abuse of the CC election process. We are puzzled by the statement that some of Frank's criticisms were "belatedly abandoned". Is it incorrect in their view to modify one's opinions as facts become more clear? And if Frank's interrelation of the August 28th RAAG-Campaign Staff meeting was baseless, why did hostilities and tensions remain in those sections?

Page 4, para. 27

It is misleading to say Justin's calls "were never returned" by Frank. Frank tried to return the calls, but was unable to reach Justin. It is also a complete mischaracterization and extremely misleading to attribute to Frank the statement that the CC election results represented a "revolt of the dipshits". No one in MCLL believes any of us are "dipshits". The expression simply stated the manner in which, in fact, the Murphy collective perceived many MCLL members, a perception they still hold judging by the contemptuous tone of their paper, especially its last five paragraphs.

Page 4, Para. 29

The only thing "proved" by Frank's failure to mention Valerie's misconduct to Justin was that he did not feel it was the central issue.

Page 4, Para. 32

It is implied that Justin, on Saturday, was "unaware of all that was transpiring" and that he was not a member of the "bloc" then and, further, was not a member when he entered the Sunday night membership meeting. This ignores the fact of his Friday meeting with Frank. This ignores his statement on Sunday that he had called Sheila and reported an "incorrect meeting." And it is significant that the paper states that he called Sheila but is silent regarding the date of the call. We believe Justin was, in fact, a member of the Murphy collective on Sunday.

Page 5, Para. 34

It is misleading and contemptuous to assert that the agenda of Sunday night's GM meeting was changed by Frank's initiative and that this act helped prove that people were not "forthright and principled." Frank moved an agenda change; the membership supported and voted for the motion by a 22-14 vote. The Murphy collective apparently does not accept the principle of majority rule.

Page 5, Para. 36

We do not agree that proper criticism/self-criticism requires that criticism be asked for, or that the criticizer ask specifically if the