

Letter from Max Luce

July 1944

T. W. Brown

Dear Comrade,

after our last A.F. meeting I find it impossible to remain a member of the organisation. I have been considering the matter very carefully and it seems to me that my presence in the A.F. can only give rise to more violent and disagreeable discussions at our meetings and struggle within myself.

I am resigning as a protest against what I consider to be a lack of ^{revolutionary} ~~moral~~ attitude in the A.F. . The A.F. is not in my opinion , a political party in which members are held together merely by a joint programme, it should be a movement in which each member ~~has~~ respects and loves his fellow members. Some comrades sneered at the last meeting, when John and I talked of the friendship and loyalty members should feel towards one another , I am afraid that this sneering attitude towards principles is at the root of the trouble occurring in the A.F. . This was shown at the time of the Desmond affair. It took ~~the~~ ^{some} comrades quite a long time to admit Desmond's guilt simply because of the lack of confidence they had in VR, JH, ^{Peter} and I. When Bill Gape started behaving in the most insulting way towards some comrades and myself in particular again a number of comrades were prepared to show sympathy towards Gape and did not feel in the least insulted by the insults other comrades had to bear. Recently the Spaniards Pradas and Delso came along and ~~inferred that~~ accused us of not wanting to

collaborate with them , though the reason they gave was extremely flimsy , that of the letter, many comrades were prepared to believe that the fact that the letter was not read was part of a dark plot to keep the Spaniards away from our movement. A few facts would have easily dispelled their suspicions. Vero and I have helped and worked with the Spaniards not only during the revolution but when they arrived in this country. We have many friends among them . I was the first in our movement to talk of collaborationx with the Spaniards and I addressed an appeal to them to work with us when I talked at the Conway Hall 3 years ago. But after having known them for 5 years , having had numerous discussions with them and having followed their paper I knew of their equivocal attitude regarding the war and presumed that a body like the AF which denounces Rucker in no uncertain term would not be willing to ally itself publicly with an organisation which was known to be pro-war, by all those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. My remarks and more particularly those of John and Vero were put down to "personal differences " with the Spaniards, differences which had never existed as proved by the facts quoted above. Just as at the time of Desmond and Gape many comrades were prepared to believe Delso and Pradas , whom many of them had never seen before, rather than V.J. and I, with whom they have worked for many years. The result was that they were manoeuvred by the Commission. First the Commission said that they would produce a document showing that the CNT group in this country was opposed to the war , and they in fact produced a

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document ~~which~~^{did} not answer our point as it did not refer to the present war. They later on admitted never having discussed the question of the war between themselves and later even refused to make a statement on their attitude to the war and asked for unconditional collaboration. Far from being shocked by such a shifty attitude the A.F. licked the hand they had been beaten with and forgot all about their question of the war. I would like the comrades to re-read sometimes the correspondence between the Spanish Commission and ourselves and then they might see why I maintained that they have treated the A.F. in a dishonest and insulting way.

The issue of the Spaniards has been obscured by a lot of personal hostility, and I think that this crisis was bound to occur ~~whatever~~ sooner or later. It is no use kidding ourselves there is some hostility against what has been called the "belsize Rd. people". Phillip has been frank enough to admit that such an hostility existed but Ken has persistently denied it when he was openly and frankly asked about it though ~~behind~~ with other comrades he has often complained of the dictatorship of Belsize Rd ~~in~~^{very} ~~violent~~ ~~language~~. The case of Ken illustrates what I mean by lack of principles in the A.F. . Ken has never once attacked us and me in particular either privately or in public but he has built a ~~secret~~ reserve of resentment which manifests itself by attacks behind our backs or by outbursts at AF meetings on completely different questions. When I have had to criticise Ken I have always seen him personally, or written to him. I have told

him that he was lazy and inefficient at the office and that he had an equivocal attitude over Bill Gape. Once my criticisms were put to him I tried to forget about them and ~~findxxxxxi~~^{ng} ~~xxxxratux~~ I was glad when Ken showed abilities in other directions such as reporting strikes and speaking. I think Ken should have expressed his criticisms of me in the same way instead of storing them up or venting them with other comrades.

I wanted to see Ken and talk all this over with him but after the last meeting I feel too discouraged to do so. The attitude of Tom has also been so strange that I feel that there is something really wrong somewhere and that it is beyond my forces to remedy it. I have worked with Tom for about five years and John has worked in close collaboration with him ever since he joined our movement, I can't remember a single issue of any importance in which we disagreed with Tom (up to the question of the Spaniards), there is not a single step we have taken without consulting Tom and getting his approval and yet now Johⁿ and I cannot open our mouths without being accused ^{by} ~~him~~ of having base political motives in our minds. We are accused by him of dictatorship, when, if there is any dictatorship he is as responsible for it as we are as he should share the responsibility for everything we have done with his approval.

If I saw that Tom and Ken has some good reasons behind their attitude I would of course try to mend my ways but I frankly confess that I ~~don't~~ think they are prompted by personal motives and that the only way for me to meet their approval would be ~~by~~ for me to stop criticising them. I be-

lieve it is a great mistake on my part to tell Ken when I think that he is lazy, to tell Tom when I think he is unreliable regarding the delivery of articles or ~~that~~ he refuses to accept responsibilities, I should not tell Jack that he is ignorant of the attitude of the Spaniards regarding the war, etc , etc. I realise that it would be better to be nice to everybody but though I esteem it a great privilege to be a member of the AF I cannot possibly change my character and my love for direct and truthful relations with comrades for the sake of remaining in it.

I will not disguise the fact that resigning from the AF has costed me a lot. I particularly regret ~~max~~ that this will prevent me from assisting to the Anarchist Congress on which I founded great hopes . I also deeply regret to having to resign from the Editorial Board as from its inception I have given War Commentary the best of my time and energies. But I can assure the comrades that I will go on working for the movement as hard as possible and that I shall remain loyal to it . I will carry on my obligations towards the Express Printers , The Freedom Bookshop, the French Magazine and I will help Peter at the office . I am sorry if my leaving the Editorial Board will ~~gave~~ more work to some comrades but I will do my best to help , if it is necessary, the comrade who will take on my job in the "technical" side of the paper.

I hope that when the ~~wounds~~ ^{wounds} ~~wounds~~ will be healed and when the inexplicable ~~XXXXX~~ grievances of certain comrades will have

disappeared I shall be allowed to join the A.F. once again.

Before leaving you I would like to appeal once again to all of you to make an effort to be as frank as possible towards one another and to remember that thoughtless criticisms and accusations can cause more serious harm than some comrades seem to think . I would also remind the comrades to keep the confidence of the movement better than they have done in the past , gossip with persons foreign to the movement do not improve relations within the movement . I had often wanted to raise that point but was afraid of stirring up more hostility, as this ^{letter} is a bit like a testament, I can mention it now !

I am sad at leaving you but I know that inside ^{OM} ; outside the A.F. I will work with you for the cause of Anarchism and the Revolution.

Yours fraternally,

M