Dear Comrade Ridley

I thank you very much for your kind letter of Feb 18th. I was extremely pleased to read there that you agree with us that bringing stuff for increasing knowledge and to the working class men was most needed and that the ideas just reflected in my book of the book find a sympathetic understanding.

I heard in the meantime that many Conservative elements left the T.P.O. so that you are fewer than before to make it a valuable revolutionary factor. In the name of the T.P.O. is indicated that not only a socialist doctrine but the class, the working class is the dominating conception; in the present times, now that we see in nearly all countries socialist parties assisting or leading in establishing stronger dictatorial power of the state over production and working class, the name socialism begins to lose its head (cherished by so many people) and assume an ominous sound. A name and doctrine may withhold many militants from approaching with open mind the new, still and unofficial notions and ideas emerging from them. If the class is put into the forefront it means that we stand open-minded before the new conditions and need phenomena of class-fight, and build our theoretical insight upon them. Thus it may appear that your party is just the most appropriate to take care of the book and to promote it being published as much as possible. We have to see the matter in this way, that it best tries to bring new ideas to the workers (taken from their own practice) that will strengthen them for future fights, give them self-confidence, and make them immune against the spiritually suppressing influences of the modern ruling powers. Such a book cannot find sympathy of furthering from a middle-class publisher that a progressive, ethical liberal will not publish. I subscribe to an inducive, clear feeling. But in that case it must be a curse for the workers for themselves, or groups standing at their side, to see to that that such a book is not distributed or hampered (perhaps for petty reasons) to appear. From my correspondence with
comrades in America and Australia (P. N. Stasheff at New York, J. S. Dawson at Melbourne). I learn that printing in America is exceedingly expensive, whilst they are only poor people, and books from Australia cannot be imported into England save in single specimens. As they all advise to have it published if possible, in England, and they are expecting and welcoming it with great desire. Now that England just was the scene of wild strikes with a splendid spirit of solidarity, it is here that a clear understanding of the meaning of such outbreaks and of their significance for the future is most needed, and may be expected at the same time.

So it would be a heavy disappointment and a pity if such a mere technical handicap as shortness of paper should prevent the publishing. Try to arrange it in any way and do the utmost to make it possible. If there are other obstacles, please inform me, that I can see what perhaps can be done, or how the matter stands. Financial (as I cannot afford) even if we could find means here, every sending of money to other countries is forbidden.

I was much interested by what you wrote on my little work on Darwinism and Socialism. Is the English translation published by Charles Kerr in Chicago, long ago, when it was a Broad-minded successful publishing firm? I remember I have seen this translation and found some sentences not sufficiently exactly rendered; this may be of importance if you think of making at some time a new edition; in that case I will look for my old notes, to provide you with a good translation. Still more I am interested in what you write that you are publishing a book on English revolutionary tradition; I am desirous to see it.

I include on a separate sheet the opinion expressed in a press notice of a reformist-ethical weekly, thus rendering the impression made by the book upon people living in a quite different line of thought.

Hoping that you may succeed, I remain fraternally yours,

[Signature]
Dear Comrade Ridley,

I thank you very much for your extensive letter of March 9, where I saw your interest in 'The Workers' Councils' and that you will keep it in mind continually and do your utmost to find a publishing way for it. You refer only to lack of paper: but you add that you feel it is the culprit by having under your two greater books of 1000 and 2000 words or revolutionary history. Could it not be possible - since the books and means of the present situation are more pressing; to make an interchange and disable a part of it to this smaller book of only 5000 words, to bring this out first, and then the historical studies a little bit later? Or is perhaps this idea based on a wrong judgment of the paper situation? There are reasons not to postpone the publishing; the development of the world goes on rapidly; so we have to drive forward the spiritual movement. The situation is worsening in England too, and may come to a crisis; it is important that to the worker's views are opened. In England an able reviewer here in Holland (a moderate socialist) concludes his sketch in this vision: when that does not succeed, England slowly goes down in impoverishment, not without resistance, with heavy internal disturbances and pains, with Labour Govt. compromised, the workers class demoralised, the Tories in power only to aggravate the conditions, the result will be general despondency and embitterment; the only way out is help from America; something analogous for our country. From the Munich Gang's Weekly I got also the impression of danger, though here a greater capitalist strength appears. It is all seen from the middle class point of view. We, looking from the workers' viewpoint, see matters different; because we know of and rely upon, the forces lying hidden in the working class. But these must be awakened and brought to consciousness; they remain inactive if it stays staring at Parliament and Trade Unionism. The masses must know how to build up and organise production themselves, by constructive work from below, by strenuous exercise of themselves and their organs. This holds for all Western, even the plundered, Europe (in a wider sense for all the world). Everywhere where the workers have their beginnings
about socialist and communistic party politics, they have lost confidence and enthusiasm, but do not know their force and what they are open. They fight, in strikes against capitalistic oppression, with endurance, courage, and a fine spirit of solidarity, but they do not know how this fight and this spirit will open the way to self-won freedom. They fight, so to say, with closed eyes. Thus it is a matter of first necessity that new views are presented to them, that they see the significance of what by intuition and necessity they are doing already (to take away the doubts when for their strikes they are attacked from all sides), and see that they can build up the new order saving society. In the 3rd part of The Worker’s Councils it is said that, if anywhere, then in England a conquest of power might be possible by a succession of partial steps; because of the character of the English ruling class to seek for practical solutions in every emergency and to yield before the breaking point is reached. But this will depend on the working class, whether it will be equal to its task. Since all propaganda needs time to spread and have effect in new convictions, it is necessary not to lose time, and to make haste. We cannot expect that the working class, in its present weakness, will be able to prevent a third world war by withdrawing it by revolutionary counter actions; but after 1917 when it will stand before the choice of building up their free world, or a deep slavery under a united world capitalism.

You speak of libertarian socialism as the trend of the I.L.P. in the near time. What was called by that name till now mostly was a sentiment rather than clear knowledge, a sentiment of distrust against party rule and State-socialism. Those belong to the time of ascendancy of capitalism, when the workers had to fight for their place within this system. Now the time seems ripe for a new phase with new goals, self-rule and mastery of the workers over production. You speak of cross-roads. But theory is still entirely dominated by the old doctrine; nearly all socialists and communists believe that State-socialism and Parliamentarianism and Trade-unionism are prescribed by Marxism, by the science of Marx and Engels. This belief we have to refute. Now that the working class has to solve
the problem how to combine freedom with organisation, the libertarian ideas have to
develop from sentiment into clear knowledge, based on substantial economic theory.
So we want books, materials for study, wherein it is laid down. The F. S. C., learning upon
theoretical work in Holland and German experience, has done much to provide a solid
economic and social basis, and it is of great importance that the English speaking world of
labour should get access to such international literature. The books should serve not so
much to convert or convince present leading spokesmen, who are mostly clinging to
traditional ideas, but chiefly to instruct the approaching next generation that has to do the practical
work and fight. We want books to be published, to be widely circulated, in order that
the young workers can read and find out truth after their own judgment, must we suffer but
by lack of means, against the ruling documeny by their power and money able to foist proclamations,
the voice of revolutionary fight for free society cannot be heard. After and besides the
"workers' councils", we know of more books and pamphlets that should be translated and
published in English, new the chief world language. Could not you bring together a kind
of Combined Socialist Publishing house, by appealing to persons of different interests all,
interested in spreading wider knowledge on workers' problems, socialism, liberty, social
development; something as Charles Kerr in Chicago?

I understand that your "Engels society" is a group devoted to the study of Marxist
and other theoretical subjects, and, I suppose, limited in extent size and in means for
publishing writings. When I will be able to make a revision of "Marxism and Darwinism"
I will be happy to send it to you in order that you, if you wish, may publish it (A
conflict with Kerr will not arise out of it, I suppose). I will be greatly interested to
read your pamphlet on Socialism and Religion, when it appears; because in 1905 I made
a lecture on the same topic at Foreman (my first contact with the German S.P.) which
was printed as a pamphlet; I am not sure to have still a specimen of it. I suppose that
we will have approached the subject from different sides (it has so many sides!); my
That religion is based on the contradictions of social economy and point was that not atheist propaganda, but revolutionary spirit of the workers and clear Marxist insight makes religion slipper away from them and disappear gradually.

You mention Gorky's World Revolution, that expressed the high hopes and the best thoughts of the time; we then could not imagine what was happening with the Russian revolution and the workers' fight. It was dedicated to Lenin; I suppose you know his later "Open Letter to Lenin"? He died 1924; he was my best friend, we made most of our socialist fights in common. He was the foremost poet of Holland, his pre-socialist poetry beloved and venerated all over the country.

Besides his poetry (all in Dutch, of course) he made a study on the World's Great Poets, which we hope to be able to publish within some years.

Here also I read of the Paris conference of socialist groups. If it must serve to exchange ideas it will have its utility. I do not go; I am no conference-man; I can better express my ideas by writing. I fear that the Socialists' powers are too weak to influence really European politics. When the workers in every shop, every enterprise, in every country have established their class-unity in fight against capitalist power, then their international unity will establish itself without any difficulty. So I see for myself the chief task is helping them — through theoretical explanation and understanding — to find their way of unity and class-fight.

With fraternal greetings,

Your very sincerely,

[Signature]