



DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS CANADA
MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES CANADA

56, THE ESPLANADE
SUITE 202
TORONTO
ONTARIO
M5E 1A7

TELEPHONE 416 366 6702
416 863 6733
FAX 416 861 9386

HALIFAX 902 453 0998
MONTREAL 514 874 0009
OTTAWA 613 722 7289
VANCOUVER 604 261 2900

a classe

To : Alain Destexhe

March 6, 1992

CC : Bernard Pecoul
Jaques De Milliano

Fr : Jos Nolle

Ref. : report on incident with Montreal representatives

In this letter I briefly summarize to you what happened before and after the sending of a fax to Bernard Pecoul by the Montreal representatives of MSF Canada in January this year. This letter is ment to close this matter.

Since October 1990 I work under contract of MSF Holland in Canada on two issues : active recruitment and fundraising.

From the beginning I have been working with a group of Canadians that volunteer their time and are very enthusiastic about the MSF "philosophy". They help me out in Toronto, but also in Montreal, Halifax (East Coast), Vancouver (West Coast) and Ottawa (where the Canadian Federal Government has its seat).

In Montreal I have been working with Pierre Hamel and Dr. Vincent Lacroix since November 1990.

Pierre Hamel is a "bush pilot", who works only during the summer months in the northern part of Quebec. In the past he worked several periods in Zaire with "Aviation Sans Frontieres Quebec". Pierre is very enthusiastic about promoting MSF in Quebec, but in my opinion he has two problems :

1. He is not able to control his emotions around the ideas of Quebec to separate from Canada with regard to the international idea of the Medecins Sans Frontieres family;
2. During most of the year he is unemployed.

Pierre did put a lot of energy in promoting MSF in Quebec, but I had to keep him all the time "under control", so that he would not go too fast. He did never appreciate my "step by step" approach of the development of MSF Canada. He made constantly clear that to achieve more results in Quebec, we should create a full time paid staff person in Montreal (and he would be the obvious candidate).

Vincent Lacroix is also enthusiastic about the MSF organization, but was really all the time too busy with his work and other commitments to spent enough time with Pierre. Vincent did some good media interviews (he is an excellent bilangual spokesperson), and

his involvement gave us the necessary "medical cloud" in Quebec. As long as Vincent was involved, he had a good "balancing" effect on the "go, go, go" mentality of Pierre. Unfortunately at the end Vincent was not able to see Pierre's "hidden agenda".

The contact that Pierre made with Bernard and the fax that they sent (as I understand on request of Bernard after their initial approach to him), were clearly an indication that they were trying to create their own little "MSF Quebec".

Just three weeks before they sent this fax, on January 11, we had a meeting in Toronto with representatives from Montreal (Pierre), Halifax, Vancouver and Ottawa. During this meeting I explained :

1. the details of the incorporation of MSF Canada (same legal structure as MSF USA in New York) that went in effect per 1-1-92;
2. the details of the 1992 budget.

We all agreed that with the limited budget we have (140.000 C\$), we can not (yet) afford to do all our promotional material in both english and french. A long discussion around Pierre's disagreement with this followed and he seemed to settle with our promise to work on french material as soon as we would have raised some additional funds in Canada (maybe second half of 1992).

But, back in Montreal, Pierre obviously had no patience anymore and tried to get his way by contacting Bernard and ask for a separate budget from Paris or Brussel for the activities in Quebec. In his fax he simply states that MSF Canada does not respect the "demands" of Quebec. I hope it is clear that this is not the situation at all with our "step by step" approach.

For me this action of Pierre and Vincent was "a slap in the face". Coming from Europe I am completely unbiased about the Canada/Quebec discussion. I just try to manage my limited budget.

Although you recommended in your letter that we would sit together with Pierre and Vincent, I did not feel like that anymore.

Therefore I asked Jim Lane to send them a letter not to represent MSF Canada anymore in Quebec. Jim Lane is in MSF Canada vice president and coordinator of all the Canadian volunteers involved. This letter should come from him with my agreement as president.

I have recently been in Montreal (February 19 and 20). Although I urged Pierre and Vincent to meet with me, they were not willing to do so. I had to conclude that they announced that MSF was not active anymore in Quebec. I have corrected this immediately and I am in the proces of getting a new team of volunteers involved in Montreal. For the time being however, our activities there will be "low key". I have thanked Pierre and Vincent in a personal letter for their efforts.

My excuses for this incident. I hope it did not cost you too much time. I also hope that this letter offers enough information to close this matter.

