The Program of Commonwealth College

BY CLAUDE WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR

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The Program of Commonwealth College for the current academic year is designed to further the interests of the labor movement in the Southern states. The college has been reorganized and is now open to non-resident members.

The program includes courses in the labor movement, agricultural and timber workers, and other important groups in labor's economic struggle. Wages, hours, and conditions of work cannot be substantially improved in agriculture, textile, auto, cement, and other Southern industries until these entrenched and exploited workers are organized. The resident courses and field classes of Commonwealth have been especially adapted for leadership training and to further organizational efforts among agricultural and timber workers of the South. This program has been endorsed by the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, by District Four of this organization (Southern region), and by the executive council of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

The deteriorating conditions among Southern agricultural and timber workers cannot be corrected until Negro and white workers are organized together. There are no institutions in the South where these racial groups may be brought to gather for instruction and direction. Commonwealth will set up and conduct classes at strategic points in the field where this may be done. One of the most important of these classes is to be in Little Rock. Here local officials, county leaders, organizers, and executive council members of the unions will receive intensive instruction in labor union problems. The estimated budget for this extension work is $1000.

SOUTHERN TENANT FARMERS' UNION has been a movement of historical significance. Its effectiveness has been registered in making the nation 'sharecropper conscious' in forcing recognition of plantation conditions and practice by the state and federal governments; in setting up tenancy commissions; in proposed legislation; in securing convictions forpeonage. Now the transition must be made from a movement to a labor union which can be

GOVERNING COUNCIL ADDS UNION LEADERS

Nine Non-Resident Members Elected; Will Convene December 4-5

Completing its reorganization program, the Commonwealth Association last week chose by ballot its nine non-resident members, all of them well-known labor leaders from states which the college is particularly designed to serve. The newly-elected members will meet here on December 4 and 5 with the Administrative Council in a full conference of the Association, at which plans will be made for widening and developing the scope of Commonwealth activities.

At the same time a reorganized National Advisory Committee was set up, composed of nationally known figures in the labor and liberal worlds (See list of names on Page Two). Many of these men and women have served on the Advisory Committee in the past; some have just been added, and others will be added in the future.

The nine new members of the Association are:

J. R. BUTLER, Memphis, Tenn., president of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union for the last three years, now vice-president of the new CIO union with which the STFU has affiliated, the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America. Butler has a record of many years activity in organizing Arkansas sharecroppers.

WILLIAM J. IGO, Seminole, Okla., president Seminole Typographical Union No. 931. Igo helped to build the first oil locals in Oklahoma, and has been prominent in the labor movement in that state.


WALKER MARTIN, Birmingham, international executive in the member of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America. Martin has achieved prominence for his work in sharecropper organization.

TO THE FRIENDS OF COMMONWEALTH

DOMINICAN civilization is seriously threatened all over the world today. In Spain and China men are fighting desperately in defense of their freedom and their right to live as human beings. Elsewhere the dark shadows of reaction and fascism are deepening. The only bulwark against these dangers to civilization is a strong labor movement, thoroughly conscious of the enemies it must repel.

On this page appears the program which Commonwealth College has planned as its part in building the American labor movement at its weakest point, the South. While it is proper to emphasize the struggle in Spain and China, we urge our friends to remember the important part that Commonwealth is playing in the fight against reaction in our own country.

We appeal to you to send us immediate financial assistance, or to indicate by letter what contributions you will be able to make during the school year. Correspondence should be addressed to Donald G. Kohler, secretary-treasurer of the college.
Southern Summer School
Trains Women Workers

BY CHARLES R. LOCKE

Because of the importance of workers' education in the task of labor organization, the Fortnightly is presenting to its readers a series of articles describing the institutions which, like Commonwealth, have as their purpose the training of union leaders. This article is the first of the series.

Although in operation for only six weeks out of the year, the Southern Summer School, in North Carolina, fulfills a leading function in workers' education, constituting, as it does, one of the three labor training centers in the South. A member of the Allied Schools, which also maintain summer sessions at Bryn Mawr, Wisconsin University, and Northwestern, the school was founded in 1927 by a group of socially-minded women for the purpose of training women in industry to understand their position in society and to help them bring about improved conditions.

In the ten years since its founding about 300 women have attended and at present a large proportion of these graduates are active in Southern communities as members of labor unions, industrial clubs of the YWCA, and other organizations. Every summer about thirty women from the textile, tobacco, garment and other industries have attended from such states as Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and the Virginias.

As yet the school has no permanent location, the present arrangement being to select a camp or country hotel somewhere in North Carolina for the annual term which begins in July. Plans are under discussion for establishing a permanent home, and also for making the institution co-educational, so that men workers may share its benefits. Women between 18 and 30 are now admitted, most of them on scholarship, since it is difficult enough for them to lose six weeks of employment without facing the added problem of tuition. The scholarship funds are provided by the backers of the school, and are awarded through selec-tions of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, final decision being made by Mrs. Louise Maclaren, director. Students from the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union were also taken in at the last session, and the basis of attendance will probably be further broadened in the future.

The policy of the school is determined by a committee which includes union representatives, educators, and a member each from the student body, the faculty, and the alumnus. Classes are offered in economics, union methods, English, public speaking, parliamentary procedure, health education, dramatics, youth training, and current events.

The dramatics course has proved to be one of the leading centers in America for the development of workers' plays and skits. Under the direction of Hollace Randell, the students draw upon their own experience in labor battles and improvise their own dialogue. The results have been some of the freshest and most vigorous skits yet created in the field of labor drama.

In the social science workshop the women are taught to draw charts and maps in order to help them in understanding and comparing conditions in industries. Song books are made here for the purpose of putting union songs into the hands of the workers.

One of the outstanding features of the school is the Pioneer Youth class, which trains students in organizing and conducting clubs for workers' children. The aim of this class is to introduce the children to their parents' struggles in order that they will have a firm belief in unionism when they grow up to carry on the fight.

The Southern Summer School maintains a permanent headquarters in New York at 302 East 50th St.

COMMONWEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE announces the election of the following persons as members of its National Advisory Committee:

Roger Baldwin, executive secretary, American Civil Liberties Union.
Walter Bergman, American Federation of Teachers.
John Bosch, president, Farmers' National Holiday Association.
George S. Counts, editor, Social Frontier.
Harold Coy, Eastern bureau manager, Federated Press.
Clinton S. Golden, regional director, Steel Workers' Organizing Committee.
Lester Granger, secretary, Workers' Bureau, National Urban League.
Carl Haessler, Central bureau manager, Federated Press.
J. B. S. Hardman, editor The Advance, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.
Len Harris, Farmers' National Holiday Association.
Donald Henderson, president, United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America.
Angelo Hernandez, national executive board, Workers' Alliance.
Irwin Kussell, secretary-treasurer, American Federation of Teachers.
Elizabeth Lawson, writer and educator.
E. C. Lindeman, contributing editor New Republic.
Grace Lumpkin, novelist.
Alexander Meiklejohn, San Francisco School of Social Studies.
E. F. Poulnot, Florida Workers' Alliance.
A. Philip Randolph, international president, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.
Reid Robinson, president, International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.
Mark Starr, educational director, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.
Willard Uphaus, executive secretary, Religion and Labor Foundation.

Dramatics Class Offers Skit by Florence Lasser

Florence Lasser's skit, "Who Is Getting Excited?" was presented by the Commonwealth class in Workers' Dramatics on Saturday night, November 18, as their first production of the fall quarter.

The play, directed by Lee Hays, deals with a scene in a small garment shop where the girls are hesitating on the question of whether to join in a general strike of the clothing industry. The two bosses were played by Don Kobler and D. Shane; the girls' parts were taken by Rose Turchin, Gertrude Lipschitz, Katherine Barthey, Rosalie Stenson, Margaret Musselman and Edith Rubin.

Published by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the skit was given as an example of a dramatic form rising directly from a characteristic workers' experience. Plans for the class include the study of all such skills that are available in order that the qualities most productive of dramatic effect may be analyzed and utilized in the students' own experiments.

This class's next production will be given in connection with the Association conference on December 1 and 2.
How the Wheel and Alliance Grew From Seven Men to Become a National Force

BY HORACE BRYAN

Thus the organization spread from one state to another. Discussion concerning the formation of a National Wheel became general, and in July, 1886, such a body was formed at Litchfield, Jackson county, Arkansas. The Hon. Isaac McCracken was elected president of the national body, A. E. Gardner secretary-treasurer, and Ison P. Langley lecturer. Within twelve months of the establishment of the National Wheel fifteen states had asked for charters of affiliation.

Parallel with the Wheel another farmers' organization was growing up. This was the Farmers' Alliance, the first body of which was organized at Poolville, Parker county, Texas, July 13, 1879. Thence it spread through Louisiana to Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee; westward into New Mexico and Colorado; northward through the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) to Missouri, Kansas, the Dakotas and other states.

As it became evident that the two organizations had almost identical programs and aims, they called simultaneous conventions to meet in Meridian, Mississippi, in December 1888. Here they came together and formed the National Farmers' Alliance, Wheel and Cooperative Union. The call went out for the next national convention to meet in St. Louis in 1889.

The National Farmers' Alliance of the Northwest called a convention in St. Louis at the same time. Representatives were also present from the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association and the Colored Farmers' Alliance. T. V. Powderly, Grand Master Workman, and Ralph Beaumont, chairman of the legislative committee, of the Knights of Labor were on hand to arrange cooperation on such legislative measures as could be agreed upon. Governor Francis of Missouri and Mayor Noonan of St. Louis gave welcoming addresses. President Jones of the National Alliance, Wheel and Cooperative Union was far from wrong when he opened the convention with the words, "This is indeed an auspicious occasion."

That little group of seven farmers which met in a log school house near Des Arc, and the other group down at Poolville, Texas, which had organized the first Alliance, had really started something. As their official historian, W. S. Morgan, said, "They "built" something; and their "buildings" are "built" wiser than they knew; their "buildings" may have been blessed more abundantly than they dared to hope."

At the first day's meeting word was received from the Farmers' Alliance of the Northwest and the Farmers' Mutual

Acquisition of New Piano Welcomed by Commoners

A long-standing need was filled last week when the college made arrangements whereby Marvin Sanford's piano was transferred to the Commons and the battered old wreck from which dozens of Commoners and visitors have vainly tried to wrest tunes was consigned to the rubbish heap.

Despite the constant need of a piano for the monthly square dances, for group singing, and for other social functions, Commonwealth has been struggling for months with an instrument that had approximately twenty non-functioning keys, a broken pedal, and two upper octaves out of tune with the remainder of the keyboard.

Aid of the first results of the new acquisition is expected to be the rapid development of chorus work.

Benefit association looking forward to cooperation and consolidation. Consolidation was never achieved, but there was close cooperation. The St. Louis convention adopted a broader name: Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union.

This farm organization and the North-west Alliance were the economic organizations out of which grew the Populist Revolt and the People's Party movements. They controlled many local governments; elected some governors, sent a bloc of senators and representatives to Washington, and made a serious bid for control of the nation's politics, only in the end to be defeated and dissipated when they left the fundamental issues and went chasing after "Free Silver" and fusion with William Jennings Bryan's Democrats.

They were the "radicals" and "anarchists" and "jackass' toys" of their time and the abuse which was heaped upon their heads would fill many libraries—to say nothing of the physical treatment which they received, especially in the South. The old timers will still tell you that they elected a president and a host of governors who were never foamed to take their seats, and there seems little doubt that had it not been for fraud and dishonesty at the polls they would have had many majorities where they were given minorities. Ballot boxes were stuffed, unfavorable returns were falsified, and whole precincts were thrown out on the flimsiest technicalities by their opponents.

"We had to do it!", one Populist opponent confessed years later. "The d --- Populists would have ruined the country."

(Acknowledgements to W. Scott Morgan and his official "History of the Wheel and Alliance"; also John D. Hicks, Professor of American History, University of Nebraska, and his book "The Populist Revolt").
Banquet Marks Marriage of Musselman and Bryan

TABLES groaned under an unaccustomed burden of food Sunday night as Commonwealers gathered at a banquet to celebrate the surprise wedding of Margaret Musselman, assistant librarian, and Horace Bryan, instructor in Union Methods.

The pair had been married by Claude Williams, Commonwealth director, in White Lodge on the evening of Armistice Day, after an acquaintance which began at Highlander Folk School last summer.

Bryan, whose class in labor organization constitutes the basic course this quarter, is a native of Greenwood, Ark. He has been a coal miner and a timber worker as well as a student at Arkansas Polytechnic and Michigan State College; he has served at various times as vice-president of Local 374 of the United Mine Workers, and as state organizer for the Workers’ Alliance.

The new Mrs. Bryan was brought up in Dallas, Texas, where she attended Southern Methodist University, and then went to Washington University in St. Louis for graduate work in sociology.

[ADDS LEADERS from page one]

Edward M. Norman, Winter Haven, Fla., secretary-treasurer of the Citrus Workers’ Organizing Committee, Norman, a Commonwealth alumnus, is also a member of the intitutional executive board of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America.

William Senter, St. Louis, national organizer of the United Electrical and Radio Workers of America. Drafted last spring from his work with the SWOC, Senter led a campaign which in a few months cracked the traditionally open shop in St. Louis electrical products industry and added ten thousand members to the UFAWA.

C. A. Stanfield, Hot Springs, Ark., prominent as a defense attorney in many cases involving civil liberties, and closely allied with the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union.

Otis L. Sweden, Muskogee, Okla., state secretary of the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union and member of the international executive board of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America.

John Woodruff, Goose Creek, Texas, American Federation of Teachers leader in the Houston area. Woodruff and his associates have lately set up a printing press on which they are publishing the weekly Southwest Oil Worker and are planning to establish a weekly organ for the Classroom Teachers’ Association. The press is also turning out labor material for unions from Washington (D.C.) to California.

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used as an instrument by its members to improve their miserable day-to-day conditions. This transition must be expedited by carefully selecting union members from the field for short periods of intensive training. Commonwealth will conduct two or three special one-week sessions each year to train members. The director of Commonwealth is a member of the executive council of the STFU and of District Four, UCAPAWA.

Other members of the faculty and field staff are members of these unions. Scholarships of fifty dollars for fifteen to twenty-five students for each of these classes must be raised, approximately $1,500.

Negro and white ministers of the South are key persons in the struggle to organize agricultural workers and generally improve their lot. In some union activities the minister is usually the man, the church is the place and the program is justified by proof-texts from the Bible. Commonwealth will conduct two institutes for rural pastors—one at the college for white pastors and ministerial students; the other at Little Rock for Negro pastors, church workers and rural school teachers.

The Religion and Labor Foundation and the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen will cooperate in planning such union activities. $500 each is the estimated budget for these institutes $1,000.

The white cotton sharecropper is denied decent elementary education. The Negro is Jim-crowed and fares even worse. Teaching the three Rs to a Negro sharecropper is sedition in some quarters. Ward H. Rodgers, a WPA teacher, was given a prison sentence for reading a section of the Constitution to sharecroppers and affirming their rights under it. These cotton workers have no access to non-repressive literature. They cannot buy pamphlets dealing with their problems. To be found in possession of such would invite personal violence or a jail sentence. Commonwealth has designated a young native Negro member of its field staff to give full time to work among the sharecroppers and tenant farmers. This teacher will organize classes in the homes of these rural workers; speak in their churches, in their schools, at their halls, at their union and mass meetings. Especially, he will sit down with Negro and white local union leaders and discuss with them the economic and political significance of their mutual union struggle. This teacher is an M.A. of Columbia University; a member of the union and a recognized leader in it. The travel expense and maintenance of this worker for a year is estimated at $1,000.

There are salaries at Commonwealth, the teachers and other staff members receive mere maintenance, with four dollars per month for incidentals when possible.

SPEAKERS DEBATE ON TWO TYPES OF UNIONS

The first of a series of debates sponsored by Ruth Voithofer’s class in Public Speaking was held last Thursday at the Commons on the question:Resolved, that the craft form of union organization contributes more to the general welfare of the worker than the industrial.

An audience vote on effectiveness of presentation gave the decision to the affirmative side.

These workers are especially qualified by training and experience for their respective duties. With zeal they give their time and talent in a cause they know to be worthwhile. Maintenance per person is estimated at $220 per year—$300.

The most significant issues and incidents of the South are not reported through the daily press. They seldom are accurately interpreted by other national publications. With its field staff, its non-resident board members and its other friends in progressive movements of the South, Commonwealth is ideally situated to receive first hand information from the field; to classify it under Labor, Politics, Education, Civil Liberties, etc.; and to release it. With its library, its files and its staff, Commonwealth is equipped to interpret the South to the nation at large through liberal magazines and progressive periodicals. The Library-Research Committee of the college will investigate violations of civil liberties, repressive legislation and reactionary movements. It will do research to get the facts and the class implications of the Elaine massacre, the sugar-beet fight of the Knights of Labor, the lynchers’ strike and other important movements in the history of Southern labor. The estimated budget for the library, research and publications is $1,000.

The regular courses offered at Commonwealth, including Labor History, Economics, Imperialism, Union Methods, Labor Journalism, Labor Dramatics, etc., will be attended by about an average of thirty-five resident students. The cost per resident student is about one hundred and eighty dollars per school year of nine months. About twenty-five of these students will pay the tuition fee of fifty dollars per quarter. The estimated budget for regular resident work is $2,250.

The total cash budget to be raised for educational work: $11,450.

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