Whither Dixie?

Two Glimpses of Labor Conditions in the South.

Dear Zech: . . . I am in Mississippi going toward Mobile, riding with a miner. Here in the forests of yellow pine are many saw-mills. "These mills are shut down now," the preacher tells me: "Conditions are bad—terrible. Many workers are sick from the sole diet of blackberries."

This statement prepared me somewhat for conditions in the Southern cotton mills. At Lagrange, Georgia, it was my luck to ride fifty miles with the department head of a mill. Mill hands, so he told me, work twelve hours daily for $1.50 a day and up. The mill owners, local men, are spending large sums of money to keep out the union, for the union to them is an ominous threat to their right to run their mills as they please.

After leaving Lagrange I was definitely in the Piedmont region—among the red-clay hills of South Carolina. Here and there upon the countryside a southern baron or northern capitalist had selected a place to build his mill. Modern and efficient, they stood with a branch of a railroad pushed out to them—with neat cottages and running water for the laborers—people of the hills.

It is evening. I am riding in the back of a truck with several millhands.

"Could a fellow get work here in the mills?" I ask.

"No!" is the answer. "Most mills are running only half time."

"Are working conditions very bad?"

"We work eleven and twelve hours a day. We don't get nothin' in wages."

"They have a union, don't they?"

"Yes, but it don't do any good. Conditions are worse. You're watched all the time by the bosses. We can't talk in groups, go out to take a smoke, or run down to the company store during work time."

"Do you think the union will help any?"

"I think it'll help after a time. Times are queer. There is going to be another war—don't you think? Another Civil war between rich and poor. It's all in the Scriptures. It's going to be the last war."

"What do you think is the matter with the union?" I ask.

"I dunno. They pulled a strike when they didn't have much to feed the workers. Right now they ain't doin' much. There seems to be two unions fightin' one another."

I am at Gastonia with two unemployed mill workers sitting on the steps of a church.

"No, there ain't no chance to get work," I am informed. "There are one hundred mills in Gaston County and most are on half time. Some are entirely closed down. Thirty thousand and people are out of work with little or nothing to eat."

Laughing bitterly, one of the men remarks: 'People here are learning to live on nothin'. When they work again they'll be able to save.'

I stopped a mail carrier. "How do these people really live?" I asked him.

"Half of them are nearly starvin','" he replied. "Many have pellagra from eatin' nothin' but cornbread and molasses. The other day I saw a woman feedin' her baby corn bread soaked in warm water. They had no cow and couldn't buy milk."

These people are proud. They do not take to charity. They are used to being independent.

As I left Gastonia an old woman sitting on a porch eyed me with suspicion for a moment then hurried in and slammed the door as if from fright. Perhaps I looked like a 'furriner.'—R. J. K.

Dear Zech: I started out from—with a bunch of five white sailors and six black longshoremen in an old Reo truck. They were on their way from the Gulf coast to New York to organize the right kind of labor union—under Communist guidance. Driving all night, short of funds, they would stop and buy a loaf of bread which they tore into pieces and ate dry.

There was an engine committee, a car committee, and a finance committee—all in due soviet form. The first night out we ran out of gasoline and the filling-station man was afraid to get up in the dark. Around the camp fire which we built, one of the negroes expatiated on the happiness of life in Georgia where he was born. "White man gives you $15 a month and every Saturday gives out groceries—get all that $15 to spend on other things. Never hurries you."

"Seems to me," said another of

(Continued on Page Three)
WHITHER DIXIE
[Continued from Page Two]
the negroes, "colored man wouldn't use good judgment t' go pokin' his head in no noose. I knows what they does to us folks in Georgia." "Does white folks get tired of havin' you round, doy goin' kill ya no matter where ya is," answered the preacher.

It was interesting to see the communist organizer who was taking the party from the South to New York City try to inculcate the doctrine of full value of earnings.

"Suppose that you were earning $30 for your employer. Would you be satisfied with $4?"

"No sah, I wouldn't."

"Well, how much of the $20 would you want?"

"The negro scratched his head and finally answered, "Fifty percent.""

"Fifty percent? Why, you would want it all, wouldn't you?"

"No sah, I wouldn't. Way I looks at it is, boss makes work, gives me a job. I does work. I makes ten dollars for boss, ten dollars for self. I'se reason." Still more pathetic and disheartening were attempts to inculcate atheism. The negro preacher would agree with all the reasonable and logical absurdities of religious doctrines, if nodding his head and saying, "Yes suh" meant anything. But at the end of it all he would say, "I differs from you in jus' one thing. Church and the livin' God gonna last forever."

I felt sorry for the organizer. He faced an impossible and hopeless task. He was a dandy fellow, too—one of the quiet Irish sort, natural handlers of men, and not given to talking much or quibbling over non-essentials; the best sort of man for the job that it would be possible to find. But, who knows? The admission of negroes to equal treatment and the regarding of them as human beings is a powerful factor on the Communist side. And that sort of treatment, so it seemed, had no tendency to make the negroes bumptious.

—R. F. B.

ALL IS IN SHAPE
[Continued from Page One]
From present indications Commonwealth will have a record student-body when the college opens on October 6. Many young workers are taking advantage of the forced unemployment to further their education for service in the labor movement.

Hudson Dailey, secretary of the Socialist Party of Illinois, Henry Duel, member of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Chicago, and Miss Sylvia Walley, school teacher of Chicago, spent the week-end of the Fourth of July with friends at Commonwealth. They were on an auto trip through the South.

Joe and Bella Englestein, new-comers of Montreal, Can., after a seven thousand mile hitch-hike through the West, arrived at Commonwealth the latter part of July to take up residence and to prepare for their college work the coming year. Joe is a garment worker while Bella is an office worker. They are busy putting on a coat of real tan.

Fern Babcock, Y. W. C. A. regional secretary for the Southwest and longtime friend of Commonwealth, together with Doris Drake Leffler, Y. W. secretary at the Arkansas State University, Latfia Dowd, of Park College, and Glenn Babcock of the University of Illinois, were visitors in June while en route to Dallas, Texas, where the Y. W. has a group of college girls working in industry so as to learn conditions first hand. Glenn was along as chauffeur for the wheezy old Tin Lizzy. The Y. W. will do a great service if it succeeds in some measure in making college girls, who are largely lissed, conscious of the problems of their working sisters.

Frank Fernbach of Philadelphia, graduate of the Experimental College at Wisconsin, spent ten days with the Commonwealthers the middle part of June. Frank quickly adjusted himself to our simple life, doing his part in our daily round of labor. After picking up potatoes for a week he opined that if he were going to do that work he would invent a machine to do it. He has not yet sent us the blueprints of it.

Venice Brink, teacher in the public schools of Illinois, spent a week at Commonwealth the latter part of June. His interest in Commonwealth dates back six years when he first read of the school in the Sunday supplement of a St. Louis paper. This was his first visit, however, to our educational community.

"Voluntary Communal Living," an 80,000 word volume by William Edward Zeuch and Kate Richards O'Hare, embodying their experiences and conclusions from their years of experiment with communal living, [Continued on Page Four]
SOCIETY NOTES
(Continued from Page Three)

was sent to the publishers for con-
sideration on August 1. It is hoped
that this unique volume will come off
the press sometime this winter.

Born, Janet Lee Russell, Robert
William Hoedemaker, and Abner
Moyer to former Commoners Wanda
Stewart and Wallace Russell, Mil-
dred Koch and Peter Hoedemaker,
and Ethel Oen and William Moyer
respectively.

The Commoners enjoyed some
very interesting talks at the Sunday
evening forums out under the catalpa
tree this summer. C. H. Mayer of
Bloomington, Illinois, who spent
seven weeks last fall in Russia de-
voted one evening to his experiences
and impressions in and of Sovietland.
Barbara Gibbon and Nola Mallinson
on another Sunday evening contrast-
ed England and America frankly and
with humor. Lucile Burkhart of the
Columbia Conserv Company in-
terested us all with her account of
that unique experiment in industrial
democracy. Hugo Fischer, but fif-
teen months from Germany, gave a
vivid account of the life of a German
boy during the Great War.

Mr. Palmer, pastor of the Unitar-
ian church of Bloomington, Ill.,
and his family, stopped over several
days at Commonwealth in the course
of a summer auto tour. Mrs. Palm-
er helped with the cooking and can-
ing and big-sistered the girls while
Mr. Palmer worked in the fields dur-
ing the day and discussed Humanism
and the limitations of philosophy
with Dr. Zeuch and the rest of the
gang under the bright moon after the
day's work.

STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE
(Continued from Page One)

needed pledged. We must complete
the Maintenance Fund by the begin-
ing of the year. There are some ex-
enses that must be met regardless
of internal economies. We anticipate
a hard year and expect to draw in our
bills considerably before the winter
is over. But even within the strictest
economy we will need a completely
subscribed ($2,500) fund.

If an old pledgee will you not
pledge? If you are a new friend of
the Commonwealth idea in workers'
education, will you not do your bit
toward the completion of our three-
year Maintenance Fund before the
beginning of the New Year?

Campaign Results

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Good and Welfare

BY NAZARETH DAWN.

TOWARD REALITY

One of the most hopeful signs of
the past two years has been the
growing realism of the politically-
minded Right labor groups. There
are indications that the era of the
dogmaere's is being ushered in
while an era of realists is being

It is not that labor is getting com-
pletely rid of its millennial dawns.
There are still plenty of philosophi-
cs and dreamers who persist in dis-
sussing the nature of marriage, the
care of children, and the servantless
state in the New Society, while the
more vengeful amuse their time arguing
as to whom shall be shot first the
morning after the Revolution.

But there is a growing grappling
with the problems of these days, a
grappling with the issues of the here
and now. The formation of the
Conference for Independent Political
Action since the last election is in-
dicate and hopeful. Recent develop-
ments within the old Socialist Party
are encouraging. Both groups in
their programs and platforms are
still weighted with too much un-
intelligible verbiage. As far as the aver-
gage voter is concerned, they are
still rather top-heavy with intel-
lectuals and leaders. But, even so,
the situation is much better and the
prospect much brighter for labor,
for I take it that the only and al-
most inevitable outcome of the activi-
ties of both groups will be a Labor
Party.

It is to be hoped that the results of
the fall elections will be such as to
encourage the organization of a
Labor Party before the next presi-
dential election. We hope that the
platform writers of that future party
will cut down the platform to not
more than five planks which will
deal directly with the most urgent
and immediate problems of the work-
ers.

Ruin comes when the trader, whose
heart is lifted up by wealth, becomes
ruler.—Plato.

A conservative government is or-
ganized hypocrisy.—Disraeli.