"WHAT PRICE COAL" STAGED AT COLLEGE

Other Summer Offerings Will Include "The Enemy" by Pollock

The labor dramatics program for the summer has started with a one-act play in which realistic plans were made for the presentation of two full-length productions.

The cast for "What Price Coal?" a play originally staged by locals of the United Mine Workers of America, has been selected by Vaughan Albertson, director, and rehearsals are being held. The play was presented recently at Commonwealth and at the neighboring Center Point district school.

Peace Day Program

Early in August Commonwealthers will see Channing Pollock's "The Enemy," and tentative plans call for an off-campus presentation of the same play. Albertson plans to make the local staging as part of the Peace Day celebration to be held on the campus.

The last play of the summer quarter will be a full-length play, not yet selected, but in the intervals between the all-campus plays, members of the labor drama class will cast and present one-act plays to the Commonwealth group as part of the regular Saturday night entertainments.

Director Albertson

Albertson is visiting instructor for the summer quarter and comes to Commonwealth from Texas, where he has been active in little theater work for the past few years. A graduate of Rice Institute at Houston, he later held an assistantship at the same school. He was a member of the Rice Drama Club for four years, and has traveled in England, France and Germany, observing the new techniques in modern drama and cinema. After a master's degree at Columbia, Albertson taught dramatics at the state universities of Texas and Arkansas. He has directed sets, acted and staged outdoor representations. At Commonwealth he conducts a class in labor drama, acts, and directs and stages all dramatic offerings of campers and students.

Lucien Koch, for the past year the 23-year-old director of Commonwealth College, is now the 22-year-old director. His birthday, June 29, was followed shortly (July 4) by the first anniversary of his taking of office.

Fame. Commonwealth was one of two places in the United States noticed in a recent issue of the Christian Science Monitor. The map pointed out places all over the globe where interesting things were going on, and noted Los Angeles and Meno, Arkansas, the former for the arrival of the huge Navy dirigible and Meno because it was the seat of Commonwealth College, an institution flourishing on only $5,000 a year. Commonwealth has the clipping on the bulletin board, read it, felt proud to be living in such acyanosis.

Axes to Grind. Because he heard that Commonwealth had no axes to grind, a Honesdale (Pa.) manufacturer recently contributed a dozen double-bitted axes to the college. Unable to bid with cash, thanks to the depression in the axe business, our friend sent his help in kind. With these axes Commonwealthers will form the axe crew. They have formed the axe crew, and the axe crews are forming. The axe crew is a novel one for Commonwealth, one which we hope will be repeated by friends in the camera, laundry soap, wash bucket or other basic industries.

Commoners as Writers. Several of Commonwealth's teachers and students have long been occasional writers both on and off the campus.

CAMPUS POPULATION

College Group From 16 States
Busy in Class Rooms, Fields, Creek

A group of 63 students, campers and instructors on the campus at the time of writing, boosts Commonwealth's attendance to a new high for all time. With the recent influx of summer students, visiting instructors and vacationers, the summer quarter and camp bids fair to becoming the school's busiest and most interesting season.

Members of the group come from 16 different states. New York leads with 13 representatives. Illinois coming next, sends down nine of the present group. Ohio accounts for seven of the enrollments, and is followed in order by Arkansas, Missouri, Michigan and Pennsylvania. States having two representatives on the campus this summer are Iowa, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. One student or camper comes from each of the following states: Arizona, California, Maryland and New Jersey.

Catalpa Tree and Library

Increase in enrollment has resulted in more activity in all field's of Commonwealth's work. The library staff has enlarged to keep pace with the assigned and recreational reading of the students. Some of the classes have formed small study groups to do outside reading and supplement the classroom lectures and discussions, thereby making the ten-week period more effective. Attendance at 'twilight' lectures under the catalpa tree on the campus has been very favorable.

Industrial work goes on busily, with labor in the fields and gardens urgent at present. Commonwealthers are having a good time, eating their own food, growing their own vegetables and flowers. The library is being used for reading and study. The students are keeping up with their classes, and the library has been so crowded that the students must be selective in their reading.

To add to the comfort of the living quarters, many window screens have been made since the session started, and the one class room has been completely screened in so arguments may

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WHERE, OH WHERE, HAS PURCHASING POWER GONE?

By C. R. F. SMITH

Mr. Smith is connected with the Citizens’ Committee on Relief and Employment of St. Louis and cites here some red-blooded observations on what is happening to wage scales. The examples he gives will be illuminating to those who wonder what has happened to purchasing power. They suggest one reason why business does not revive. Editors.

To employers, workers are necessary production equipment. Right now there is a super-abundance of workers, and employers in the aggregate look upon these workers as they do upon any other commodity of which there is a super-abundance—they buy as cheaply as they can.

It’s an employers’ market, and employers—big and little, from chain stores to housewives—are making the most of it. They are quite willing to use workers as cushions with which to absorb the economic jolts that bedevil our depression-twisted progress. Nor does this attitude vary much, whether the employer be a huge corporation or a peanut vendor employing one sales boy.

Whatever the type of worker, unless he be effectively protected by union agreements or unless he has a most exceptional employer, the salary he is offered is quite likely to be so small it makes us smile with pleasure, gasp in astonishment or boil with resentment—according to our viewpoint.

Just how low are wages? Prior to the late crash, a frequent local wage for common labor was 35 cents per hour. Half that rate is now common, and recently offers have been as low as 15 cents per hour. Here are some samples of the salaries now being offered men workers: stenographer, $10 a week; production manager, $20 a week; repair and supplies solicitor, $5 a week; salesman, $12 a week; stock clerk, $8 a week; collector, $11 a week.

And good men will work for those wages. Good men prefer work at most any price, to idleness.

Three Dollars a Week

A social worker reports an 18-year-old boy working for $3 a week on a job that requires 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. The job ordinarily would pay around $18 a week. The boy wanted a job and he took it regardless of price.

Two very capable cabinet makers were sent to a furniture factory. One of them, when he discovered the rate of pay, refused to work. The other one tried it for four days, then gave up in despair. On his last day he worked from 7:30 in the morning until 2 in the afternoon and made only 25 cents.

An employment bureau recently received an order for a paper hanger to work for $1.50 a day. Investigation showed that the man was expected to supply his own paper and materials.

A family of considerable wealth asked for a houseman who would work for room and board—no further compensation.

Unemployed White Collars

Suppose we turn to the men in the “white collar” group. E. G. Steiger, director of relief for the Citizens’ Committee on Relief and Employment, in a statement which appeared in the St. Louis press recently, stated: “A distressing element in the present situation is that in the occasional openings that are found for the high type men of the ‘white collar’ class—men with college degrees or many years of highly specialized experience—the salaries are so low that even a single man with no dependents would find difficulty in existing on them.”

Here is what happened to one “white collar” man: In 1923, Evans, a college man, an experienced accountant and the father of three children, was making $200 a month. Evans lost his job in the crash. Piece by piece the Evans sold their furniture. They cashed the insurance. They cut food to the minimum. They moved from their comfortable little house into two rooms. Just before the money gave out, Evans got a job as bookkeeper in a hotel at $18 a week. Three months later the hotel decided that he was not worth $18 a week, so they cut his salary to $15. They kept Evans on as an elevator operator at $14 a week. Three months later another man got the job at $12 a week, and Evans was dismissed.

When a social worker finally found the family, there were two chairs, a table, a couple of boxes and one bed left. There was no heat. The stove had been sold for the rent. A loaf of bread and 12 cents in cash remained between the family and starvation. Mrs. Evans had been cooking what little there was to cook on an overturned electric flattop. (Luckily, the current had not yet been turned off.) Little Billy Evans, undernourished, had a cold which later developed into pneumonia.

This case is a striking example of what happens to the family of a “white collar” man who loses his professional position and is compelled to fall back to regrettably lower makeshift expedients.

Unilateral Bargaining

Not long ago I asked an employment bureau to send me a man who could do a little moving job. The bureau sent the only truck owner on the list who had bought his truck himself. He had dreamed of becoming a successful truck owner. The man came with his rickety truck. After he had done the job I asked what the charges were. “Just whatever you want to give,” he said. “I’m in a place where I’ll take anything I can get.” He then related a pitiful tale of how he and his family had been living on two meals a day and how he was unable to provide skilled surgical attention for his baby who had severely burned her hand on a hot stove. He shunned the idea of charity and was trying desperately to make enough to live on.

Among Negro workers wage standards have been practically wrecked, according to the report of the Urban League, an inter-racial group. More and more Negroes are being driven to junk and coal wagons, after they find themselves displaced on other jobs by white workers. The majority of those displaced, however, find no employment.

“More For Home Than Wages”

It is a fact of the depression (or “cycle”—if you prefer) that jobs for women are easier to get than jobs for men. It is a strange result arising out of the fact that the housewife who can afford it is willing to spend a bit to get some other woman to perform the menial tasks about the home. Particularly is she willing to spend a bit if it is a very little bit and the amount gets smaller as the depression continues.

Somehow, women, even as men, are not very charitable toward their fel­lows. One woman told me: “If a $1 a day will do a cleaning woman, why pay more? Or, if one can get a housekeeper for board, room and ‘a home’—wages won’t be much above that. As the average woman who offers to employ help sees it now, the offer of a job at any price is a gift to charity.

A man and wife with a young baby requested an employment bureau for an all-round house-worker who could stay with the family and help care for the baby. They offered $15 a week.

A social worker tells of one woman regularly employed in a home at the rate of $4 for a six-day week, less carfare, which cuts the net to $3 a week. The same social worker tells of another house-worker who in drawing the more generous stipend of $7 a week. Her theoretical hours (she lives at home) are from 8 until 5, but, in order to handle the job—and she is considered an excellent worker—she finds it necessary to be on the job 12 hours or more.

Many women are doing piece work in packing establishments or factories.

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SOCIETY NOTES
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thing from a publicity paragraph for the home town paper to a two-volume novel has been tried by Commonweathers. Either for pay or for fun, Commonweathers put their thoughts on paper, sometimes in helping them published. Latest to arrive were Man­
ferd Ettinger, student for the last two quarters, with "The Humanist: A Modern Don Quixote," in the current New Humanist; Sam Sandberg, pres­
cent acting treasurer, with an article on the going of the Harlan delega­
tion in the New Leader; and Emily Brown Fine, student for the 1930 sum­mer session, for the same periodical, with "The Crossroads." Lucien Koch's "We Went to Harlan" appeared in the May Labor Ago and an article on the same topic in many another paper and magazine. Dr. George Yeisley Rusk's "The Social Sciences and So­cial Reform" was printed in the Uni­versity of California Chronicle for July. Many a student has written squibs on labor topics for the Federa­ted Press sheets, and others, Muse­pursuing, have read with avid eyes their poems and critical articles in literary sheets.

Gaining. — Extra-mural athletics are so far from being on a profession­alized basis at Commonwealth that when the nearby Rocky farmers' nine challenged the college to produce a team and play a game, Commonwealth organized America's worst baseball aggregation almost overnight and lost 22 to 6. It being impossible to go from bad to worse, the Commonwealth nine went from worse to bad; playing the Rocky seconday season of spring time and winning, much to their surprise, 4 to 2.

Heartened, a return match was ar­ranged with the first team, the labor school boys holding down the neigh­


CAMPUS POPULATION
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Published twice a month at Mena, Arkansas, by Commonwealth College. Subscription one dollar per year. Entered as second class matter at Mena, Arkansas, under the act of August 24, 1912. Signed articles express only individual opinion. Features, particularly of labor and farmer papers, are welcome to make free use of ma­terial appearing in these columns. A line cred­iting the Commonwealth College Fortnightly will be appreciated.
Students and teachers in courses in sociology and allied subjects, such as this summer's course in the technique of leadership, are in need of books to aid in reserve reading and reference work. Below is a list of titles especially wanted. If any Fortnightly reader wishes to send used copies or to purchase new ones from this list, instructors and their classes at Commonwealth will appreciate it very much.

Social Interrelation

Brown

How We Advertised America

Cooch

New State

Follette

The Strike

Hayward

Bill Hayward's Book

Hayward

Study of Political Propaganda

Lasswell

Propaganda Technique in the World War

Phantom Public

Lippman

Mass Media

Marks

General Sociology

Shils

International

Shils

Reflections on Violence

Singer

Comparative Politics

Steele

Secrets of Great Hunter

Stein

Industry

Stern

The Chetzer

Wang

Social Change

Kimball

Gool Coast and Slum

Zarbaud

Scit Scant

Coleman

Purchasing Power

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where the week's work nets them $2.50 and $8.

The "Business Girl"

Business women, never munificently paid, are suffering a particularly hard lot. In the face of widespread unemployment, some women are replacements for women office workers with machines. This is a great time for the office efficiency dollar squeezers. If a typist has been around long enough to be drawing a decent wage, let her go. If it is necessary to replace her, hire a business college graduate who will work for an amount equivalent to decent room rent. If a sales girl has lost the bloom of youth, let her go, then blame it on the depression.

Scores of capable, experienced office women who had held responsible office positions, some of them office executives—now find themselves out in the cold. One of these women, who had been supporting younger members of her family, became almost hysterical after repeated unsuccessful efforts to get work. This woman, with a very pleasing personality and an excellent record, had managed a large office, but her salary took too big a bite out of her reduced office budget. She was removed from the top, and a girl drawing approximately half as much salary was moved in at the bottom. "I don't know what I'll do," she said.

Of every seven sisters and brothers to support. My funds are gone. My clothes are getting so shabbily that I can no longer even apply for a job."

Two young women who had worked several years as secretaries for an industrial bureau found themselves suddenly let out. One of them, who stayed around a couple days to clean out her desk, met her successor, a young stenographer who was working for half the salary the former secretary had received.

Stenographers: $5 and $10.

When jobs for business women are available, how much do they pay? Ten dollars a week is a comparatively common offer for a stenographer, and the offers go down as low as $5 a week. One firm asked for a combination bookkeeper and stenographer, for whom it offered $7 a week. When several young girls offered to take the job even at that figure, the firm decided they had not had enough experience.

A large garment factory ordered some women to operate newer and faster sewing machines. The superintendent refused to consider any woman who had not had years of experience on the peculiar type of garment being manufactured. Of the few applicants who quizzed, none consented to work for this factory because the great reduction in piece rates, they said, made it impossible for them to make even a low subsistence wage. One woman who had worked at this factory for a number of years came to an employment bureau searching for a different job. She showed her pay slip for the preceding week, $5.67, which amount she said she was able to make only by working overtime.

"Welfare Capitalism"

Among the larger employers with many workers regularly on their payroll, a few examples will show the trend of events.

Six weeks after paying a dividend to stockholders a company doing a national business announced a 10 to 15 per cent reduction in salaries and followed this some months later with wholesale dismissals from its sales staff. In one region, salesmen who had bought trucks to use in their sales work, at the suggestion of their sales manager, found themselves jobless, with useless trucks on their hands—partly paid for. All that in a firm which had already been loudly for the morale of its working force and the square dealing of its policies.

A shoe company, after announcing two blanket wage reductions within a few weeks time, precipitately laid off workmen, which the workers were requested to take so far not to interfere with their work and without pay, of course.

An employee of an electrical company complained timorously—for fear of losing his job—that the company for which he worked had asked all employees to work two weeks without pay. The man asked, naively, if that was "justice" in view of the fact that they already were receiving a bare subsistence. Pitously he begged that something be done about it.

One manufacturer summed up his very efficient method of meeting the depression: "We have some people working for as little as $10 and $12 a week, but even at that we can always cut our employees 10 per cent, and they can live on it." Half an hour later this same industrialist, after admitting that his household cost him $60,000 a year, was pleasantly discussing ways and means of reducing his household expenditures to $40,000 a year. His employees could "always" stand a 10 per cent cut, was he not magnanimously making a 20 per cent reduction in his own household expenditures?

So does adversity bring out the character of men.

Word comes at press time from St. Louis that increasing misery there has led to a demonstration of 5,000 unemployed in which four were shot by the police who also used tear bombs.

Guilt Irrelevant

By Clay Fulks

It is naive, of course, even to mention such matters as the "guilt" or "innocence" of the ruling capitalists. The old-school socialists, still under the influence of the ancient Puritanical conceptions of a quaint and simple, black-and-white, sheep-and-goat system of individual responsibility for "sin"—including "sinful" social conditions—diluted the question with a gravity theological. Though the question may serve as a good cud for the Rumania, it has scarcely any other value. No one raises the question of the "guilt" or "innocence" of wolves, or sharks, or other predatory animals.

The important point is that, regardless of their "guilt" or "innocence," the capitalists will have to go with the system in which they are bred.

Whether they will have the intelligence and the decency to make a peaceful and graceful abdication or whether they will have to be kicked out in disgrace—that will be their anxiety. In the long run, it may make little difference.

But that the civilized world is sick and disgusted of them and their decaying system of economy becomes more and more evident. Even Americans may not be quite as stupid as they have always seemed to be. There is every indication that a large and rapidly-growing number of them are acquiring a vast and deep resentment of the Russian Social System as the system of economy, especially as it stands contrasted to the capitalist system.