NEIGHBORHOOD TIES TO BE CULTIVATED

Forums May Be Established For People Living Near the College

A program that looks toward the establishment of at least two forums and the cultivation of friendly ties with the neighborhood is being planned at Commonwealth.

Last year students and teachers from Commonwealth spoke at a number of meetings in the vicinity of the school upon topics of especial interest to farmers. During the past summer Commonwealth quartette has sung labor songs and negro spirituals at several entertainments.

This form of activity is to be extended this term. It is planned to start a neighborhood forum to be held every other week in the Commonwealth auditorium-dining room. Outside speakers will be secured whenever possible, and the neighbors will, of course, contribute largely to the entertainment.

Students in the labor education class will undertake to interest the children of the neighborhood in various forms of educational activity suited to their age. Students of labor drama will organize the young men and women of the vicinity into dramatic clubs and will assist in putting on plays.

Farmers within ten or fifteen miles of Commonwealth will be aided if they wish to organize themselves into some such movement as the Holiday Association. A one-act play has been written at Commonwealth and is now being prepared for presentation at farmers' mass meetings.

It is hoped that the citizens of Mena will organize a forum during the coming winter, and if they do Commonwealth will aid in any way possible. But if no such institution develops, teachers and students may undertake to start one in the town, with the intention of turning it entirely over to Mena people as soon as sufficient interest is aroused. A well conducted forum is a real and important need of every progressive community.

Teachers Discover a Fishermen's Strike

Oliver and Bea Carlson, Commonwealth teachers, recently traveled by thumb through the South. Oliver here tells of their experiences.—Editor.

Our hitch-hiking trip from Commonwealth to Fairhope, Alabama, and back gave us a chance to contact people of all walks of life. We bumbled rides from poverty-stricken farmers with dilapidated trucks; we rode with the owner of a series of freight trucks, a road-builder and contractor who had gone broke working for Huey Long, a construction engineer, a Methodist preacher, and salesmen who grumbled that their stocks of ladies' silk hosiery, refrigerators, etc. were not selling.

Cotton may still be king in the South, but if so, we can paraphrase St. Simon by declaring that it must be a "king of the beggars." The outward appearance to the traveller of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama is that all is well. However, when one begins to look more closely and perceive the thousands of miserable shacks in which both whites and blacks are forced to live, it becomes obvious that the Gulf states are not flowing with milk and honey for the mass of people in that section.

A most significant feature arising from this Southern poverty which is proletarianizing professional and middle-class elements is the militant note sounded by almost everyone to whom we spoke to. That lack of faith in existing institutions, now spreading like a plague throughout the South, bids

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THANKS FRIENDS

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BOOKS

R. C. Jacobson
Martha Barr Johnson
Nutt Hedgcock
R. M. Gyles
Mrs. B. S. Smith
Mrs. W. M. Todd
Co-operative League

William Haber

FIFTY-FIVE STUDENTS ENROLLED FOR FALL

Orientation Class Meets In Commons; Kitchen Stove Is Overworked

Commonwealth began the second week of its fall term with fifty-two students present and three on the road to the school. Five of the fifty expected a fortnight ago had to postpone their enrollment for various reasons.

Charlotte Moskowitz, executive secretary, is glad that enrollment fell below her estimate, for every available inch of dormitory space is now occupied. It would have been necessary, if any more students had arrived, to turn the sweet-potato drier into a dormitory.

Mrs. Bernice Allen, kitchen manager, is doubtful if her department could, without improved equipment, feed any more than the seventy-five people who now report for meals. "Our stove is now sadly overworked," she says. "We need one with about twice its capacity."

For the first time since Commonwealth began its existence, the size of various classes had to be regulated. Commonwealth's only class room is filled to capacity. The orientation course meets in the commons, where a cheery wood fire burns in the great stone open fireplace. As in past years, some of the classes meet in instructor cottages. The library too, is coming in for its share of activity. There are now three attendants, dividing their time so there is always an attendant on duty during the twelve or thirteen hours a day the building is open.

Forty dollars will send a young miner to Commonwealth for a quarter. One dollar will help. Send in your contribution to a worthy cause immediately.
ARKANSAS MINERS ARE RE-ORGANIZING

By Lucien Koch

While the miners in Illinois and Kentucky are on the march, those in Oklahoma and Arkansas are not remaining idle. The miners of those two states are organized into District 21 of the U. M. of A. Five thousand of the seven thousand coal-diggers included in the district are members of the union.

We got word recently at Commonwealth that the miners at Jenny Lind, a small coal town 70 miles north, were holding a mass demonstration. A group of teachers and students boarded the college truck to get the story of the miners, and to extend them help in their struggle for a poverty-existence.

The two localities at Jenny Lind are made up of eight hundred miners. Their representatives met in the old Miner's Hall. The problem before the gathering was whether or not the men of Jenny Lind would join in a mass meeting to be held in Paris, Arkansas that midnight. Following the midnight mass meeting, the miners planned to march in a body to Spadra, there to picket the unorganized mines in order to bring out the workers and enroll them in the union. Only the three mines at Spadra remain to be brought out before the coal industry in the state is one hundred percent organized.

PRESS HOSTILITY

Once the president opened the meeting for discussion, there was no dearth of speakers. Feeling ran high. It was brought out that word was passed among some of the miners that the Paris demonstration had been called off. This rumor was labeled "propaganda" (capitalist), by the wary. They were alert. Miners were warned against "crawling" (news) spread through the conservative press or through coal company men. The press had shown hostility throughout the organization campaign. One miner said, "They want us to get only a handful of people down there, then they can say we miners don't care if there are seals in our industry."

The uncertainty prevalent at the meeting finally came to an end when word came through from a Paris local that the midnight demonstration had been called off by the International officers (presumably because the coal mines were on the verge of signing up). A silent resumption passed through the addresses. The information that the miners had dug coal all their lives. They were earnest, intense, militant, ready to fight, now that the battle was on. They had grown accustomed to doing things for themselves. They were not at all certain that the International officers were handling things right. After the official meeting, a smaller group remained over. Questions were asked and answers flew back:

Q. Who took the initiative in reorganizing the field this last time?
A. We did it ourselves. The International came in afterwards.

Q. Why did you start?
A. Had to. Our backs were against the wall. We didn't have anything to feed on. We thought before they broke us completely we'd put up a fight.

Q. Have the police or sheriffs used their guns on your organization?
A. No, not this time yet. But we know they stand ready to do so when the operators believe it necessary.

SPONTANEOUS ORGANIZATION

The Arkansas and Oklahoma fields were first penetrated by a union in 1890. The union struggle and survived until 1925 when it was thoroughly broken. A new organization started in 1929 during the Howard-Walker-Lewis strike in Illinois. This attempt, however, to bring the workers back into the union, never obtained any genuine strength. It was not until six months ago that a union of the miners was organized again on a strong and systematic basis.

It was a spontaneous movement. A miner told the story:

A mass meeting was called at Jenny Lind. It was small. Another mass meeting was held in a nearby town. It was small too. Then a district-wide demonstration was called to meet in Jenny Lind. Between four thousand and five thousand miners turned out. They came from Oklahoma and Arkansas. They organized a union themselves, choosing their own rank and file leaders. Miners were signed up. The union achieved recognition. And now the men are determined to keep it and to discipline their men to that end.

MILITANTS

Up to the present the miners' organization has been unable to improve the economic condition of its members materially. The average wage throughout the industry is under three dollars for an eight hour day. Out of this the diggers must buy their own powder, caps and fuse, all of which comes to approximately 60 cents a day. Not all of the men have jobs and those who do are not steadily employed.

The miners' union of District 21 is not a typical A. F. of L. Union. The members are experienced. They have built the union themselves and know how to value it. They are active and aggressive, suspicious of the officialdom that does not spring from their own rank and file. Certainly they might be classed among the militants. They would find much comfort with that group throughout the coal industry in the United States. Their splendid battle belongs among those now being waged against coal operators in other sections of this country.

The story of these miners again indicates that the coal operators are being beaten at their own game. They very smartly happened upon the program of closing up the union mines and moving to unorganized fields, but in Arkansas and Oklahoma as well as in Kentucky and West Virginia these fields are organizing to combat the desperate misery imposed upon them. Non-union fields are being replaced by union fields. The plan of the coal operators is being interfered with.

The quarter's first hike was staged the other day with expected results. New-Commoners, alien to the wagon tracks and foot paths that honeycomb the Ouachita forests, get lost from time to time. This time was no exception and some of the miners wandered aimlessly in the woods most of the morning and had to sprint for dinner.

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Editors, particularly of labor and farmer sections, are expected to cooperate in material appearing in these columns. A line crediting the Commonwealth College Fortnightly will be appreciated.

WHAT IS COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE?

Commonwealth was organized in 1923 to provide education for workers on a self-supporting basis.

Commonwealth seeks to develop in young men and women the capacity and desire to serve the interests of labor and the common people.

Commonwealth is located in the heart of the Ozark mountains, the southernmost range of the Ozark mountains, where it operates an agricultural educational experiment for the part-time work of students.

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Commonwealth is the only college owned and operated by its resident teachers and students.

Commonwealth is non-sectarian, non-factional, non-partisan. It sponsors no particular religion, philosophy, or political creed. It holds that conscientious action, based on scientific investigation, is the best hope of adjustment or solution of social problems.
Teachers Discover Fishermen's Strike
Continued from page One

Interior decoration is all the rage the first week. Commonwealth quarters are not expensively furnished. The walls are inclined to be splattery. But the drab, empty rooms begin to take on color as soon as they are occupied. Out of trunks come pictures and books. Bright handkerchiefs are tucked up. A spray of red and yellow leaves is collected in the nearby wood's and arranged over a window. A rusty little stove is painted with India ink. (The ink will burn off with a vile smell as soon as a fire is started.)

But Nature's exterior decoration is much more effective this time of year than are any feeble efforts of Commoners. No palette is more riotously and gaudily painted than a patch of Arkansas timber. Only the pines stand aloof and superior to this orgy of color, this emotionalism of the oaks and maples upon the eve of their long sleep.

Cappy (short for Handicap) is a sort of police dog, but he is very small and his ears refuse to stand up in the correct fashion. Fortunately he has his especial function to oppose with all the force of his canine oratory, the entrance of any newcomer to the campus. He is also disturbed at sight of a garment strange to him, even though the garment is worn by a friend of his. The first week of school is a strain on him. What with all the new students and all of the outlandish clothing, he has scarcely a moment of peace. But as soon as things settle down a bit he will chew happily upon any trouser cuff or make a social call anywhere that a door has been left open.

Bewilderment, however, is not peculiar to the dog during the first week of school. Introductions are accomplished as follows: "Mr. I've Forgotten Your Name I want you to meet Miss I Didn't Catch the Name." Persons who have been at the school a day, a week or a year are busy explaining to newcomers that the chickens are just naturally white and don't have to be washed, that a cow is not necessarily a bull just because she has horns, that peanuts do not grow on trees, that green persimmons have their drawbacks.

Former cooks would enjoy a sight of the Commonwealth kitchen at the present time. They would exclaim over the white enamel paint on everything, fair to make anti-capitalist organization, both political and economic, easily accomplished within the next few years.

At Biloxi we found about two thousand shrimp fishermen on strike. They told us that never before had they been organized, nor had any attempt been made to organize them. Economic necessity had been the school which had taught them the need of union action. They claimed that the prices paid them for shrimp during the past year had been so low that no matter how much they fished and no matter how long hours their wives and children put in at the plants of the shrimp fisheries, it was a physical impossibility to continue existing. The "good citizens" of Biloxi were scared to death of the fishermen. They were contributing funds to relieve them of their most acute distress, but as one of the local reporters explained to me, "they are doing this because they fear riots and the plundering of their homes and shops."

The shrimp fishermen proceeded to organize all fishermen along the entire gulf coast. Their union includes not only those who fish for shrimp but also oyster fishermen and those fishing for other types of sea food. At this time it is impossible to say whether the strikers will gain their demands or not, but at any rate they have broken the ice for economic organization. Unionism is there to stay.

The two great seaports of New Orleans and Mobile are jammed with vessels lying idle. Longshoremen and sailors crowd the wharves. Neither the strikers will gain their demands or not, but at any rate they have broken the ice for economic organization. Unionism is there to stay.

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Cotton picking today is all hand labor. Millions of negroes and poor whites do the job. The Rust brothers' machines, which we saw in operation at the Experimental Farm, will do the work of at least fifty hand pickers. We can expect, then, to see fundamental revolutionary changes in the future of Old King Cotton when machine picking drives additional millions into the mounting army of unemployed.

Hitch-hiking is growing steadily worse, according to the consensus of opinion at Commonwealth. This school is a hitch-hiking center. Most of the students depend upon their thumbs for transportation. If a fellow is not dressed exactly right, say the ones who know, he will spend weeks upon the road from New York to Mena.

The tenant farmers, too, are awakening. They have been reading carefully the reports of the farmers' strike demonstrations in Iowa and elsewhere. Many are proposing that a similar line of action be followed by themselves. Without doubt, it is only a question of time before the Farmers' Holiday idea will be definitely inaugurated in the Gulf states.

On our way back to Commonwealth we had the good fortune of being able to drive up to the co-operative farms around Lake Providence, Louisiana, with which Oscar Ameringer is connected. Wallace Clemens, our driver, was going to meet two of his associates, the Rust Brothers, at Lake Providence, who in coalition with the cotton pickers are organizing all fishermen along the entire gulf coast. The fishermen's bird of paradise is their union which includes not only those who fish for shrimp and oysters, but also the longshoremen and sailors. The strikers have not yet been successful, but their demands are being heard. The cotton pickers have already spent over three million dollars in organizing, and the cotton picking today is all hand labor. Millions of negroes and poor whites do the job. The Rust brothers' machines, which we saw in operation at the Experimental Farm, will do the work of at least fifty hand pickers. We can expect, then, to see fundamental revolutionary changes in the land of Old King Cotton when machine picking drives additional millions into the mounting army of unemployed.

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KOCH TO ATTEND TRIAL

Civil suits for damages amounting to approximately $100,000, filed against Harlan county citizens and officials by members of the Commonwealth delegation flogged last spring will come up October 26, according to word received recently from the American Civil Liberties Union in New York.

Director Lucien Koch plans to go to Kentucky for this trial. Probably other members of the delegation will attend. After the trial Koch will make a trip in behalf of Commonwealth to the cities of New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, and possibly Boston and Baltimore. He will be away from Commonwealth about two months.

Anyone in these cities who is interested in meeting him and getting a first-hand account of Commonwealth should correspond with Charlotte Moskowitz, executive secretary. It is impossible at the present time to give any exact dates for his eastern trip.

FARMERS ORGANIZE

Farmers of Polk county, Arkansas— the county in which Commonwealth is located—are joining the Holiday movement. The first organization was formed at Old Potter, about fourteen miles from the college. Farmers of this vicinity decided to organize after they had heard a talk upon the holiday movement by a Commonwealth teacher.

W. B. Anderson was elected temporary secretary. A committee was appointed to work out a program for the organization.

Similar meetings are to be held at various places in the county. The Old Potter Farmers are planning to assist farmers of neighboring communities to organize and it is hoped that a county organization will be perfected.

A one act play written especially for the occasion by Bill Cunningham, Commonwealth teacher, was presented at the Old Potter meeting by Commonwealth students under the direction of Bea Carlson, director of labor drama.

The scene of the play is a farm home. The bankr from town appears to kick the farmer and his wife off the place. The banker sings several songs and his refrain is:

"I always protect the American home—Until the mortgage is due."

The play ends when the banker is carried off the stage by a group of farmers.

H. Lee Jones and Oliver Carlson, members of the Commonwealth faculty, were present at the meeting and advised the farmers as to methods of organization.

COMMUNER'S COMMENT

Already nights grow cool; three p. m. becomes a more desirable swimming hour than five. Leaves on campus trees are falling, except for the pines, which still silhouette their evergreen branches against the clear blue of fall skies. Swimming will soon give way to hiking as the most popular sport. Just the other day we caught a friend sitting on his dorm porch and oiling high leather boots.

Commoners from the North, the West Coast and the East were treated to a real, "sure- enough" Southern dinner the other Sunday when the kitchen staff came out with roast pork, candied yams, turnips and all the trimmings. An unexpected treat that warmed the hearts of campus gourmets were Mrs. Bernice Allen, kitchen manager and Bill Reich, doubly famed as a teacher of education and a dinner cook.

The best of recent outdoor events was a sort of combination hike and weenie roast, early in the quarter. It started after dark and the trail was marked with candles, throwing out a chain of glow down the steep slope of the bluff on the campus. Following the lights, Commoners found themselves on a wide meadow next to Mill Creek and a camp fire where there were songs and stories.

The first few weeks of a quarter always cause a mild flurry of interest in interior decorating among the students. Women gifted with intuition, taste or some such thing, do quite well. With the men the situation is a little different. For example: Three men, who used to be a clerk, a steward and a bell-hop, live together. They decided to decorate their room in keeping with their aesthetic temperaments. The clerk got orange paint (the catalog said it was chrysine yellow, or words to that effect) and went over the walls in one of the rooms. Fellow dormitories were started, depredatory. So the walls were papered with samples from the South’s leading wholesalers. Not so good, thought the steward, and withdrew from the race, leaving the other room to Providence and the bell-hop. The latter got white paint and covered it with the orange and painted his walls. The result was a sad ivory. Heeding unfavorable criticism from roomies who gathered just outside the door to hoot, the artist went to work and painted white spots on the orangeish wall, in a random pattern. The effect was leopard like. There was nothing left to do but indicate on the door of the suite that the room was the ward of an asylum for the less fortunate mentally, which he did, thereby striking all further uncomplimentary remarks. Clever, these embryo Rembrandts in the labor movement.

Books Wanted


Frost on the pumpkin has already imposed a hardship upon the boys and girls from the city. Farming youth whose only experience at firebuilding has been turning on a radiator, does considerable shivering at Commonwealth before it learns how to start a fire. Several wet logs are poked into stove or fireplace. Kerosene is poured over them and a match is applied. The fire starts, of course, but lasts only a minute. Proflanity is no substitute for kindling wood. Aw, let’s go to the library where they got a fire started.

TO SOOTHE THE SAVAGE BREAST

Commonwealth needs phonograph records. Two teachers and several students have portable phonographs. Recently a friend of the school donated a phonograph. Thus the new need.

Without doubt many friends of the school have records which they never play. Such records would be put to good use by music-hungry Commoners. Orchestras are rare in the Oskars: concert halls thousands of miles away.

Any good music is welcome. Jazz is not taboo. Gershwin, Robeson, Wagner, Bach, Chopin. However, anything records of "Pretty Baby" or "Alexander’s Ragtime Band" cannot be regarded with enthusiasm. Neither can any record, no matter how good the music, if generations of needles have ground all of the music out of it, leaving only a hiss, as of a pan of eggs frying.

But Commonwealth has learned to have confidence in the good taste of its friends. They have donated a library of excellent books, with only an occasional volume of Eddie Guest or Tarrant.