Student Body Gives Version of "Strike"

The following are excerpts from the official report of the strike prepared by the present student body of Commonwealth, for its own use.

"A resume of events culminating in the recent disturbance shows that the main objective was submerged by confusion and emotional stress. The governing body of the college had granted partial student representation but the force of events blinded the group to this salient fact. The striking students falsely informed the labor press that Jim Crowism was an issue. This was not included in the strikers' demands, and was not mentioned as an issue at any time during the strike. Insistence on the return of Copenhagen and Forblade was stubborn devotion to a lost cause.

"That these two were inimical to the best interests of the school can be shown by the unanimously accepted report of the Student Disciplinary Committee. The report condemns them as unfit for the communal life here... Both had been warned upon admission this quarter that cynical, malicious and destructive criticism would not be tolerated. Disregarding this warning the two malcontents continued their unsocial attitude, forcing the Association to act.

"By branding the suspension as inseparable from the question of student representation their partisans virtually demanded control of the school... We disagreed with the manner of this imperious demand, believing that the problem of student representation, an old and delicate one on whose solution hangs the future of the school, should be handled by constructive, cooperative measures...

"The mutiny was carried over on a week end during which no industrial work is ever done except the preparation of meals... Studying and classes, the purpose for which Chicagoans and New Yorkers had... Continued page Four

STRIKE OVER, SCHOOL GOES ON WITH WORK

Association Holds to Policy of Non-Factional Labor Education

After a week-end of confusion, during which a student group went on strike and took virtual control of the school, Commonwealth is going on as usual with its work of non-factional labor education. It has, however, thirty-two fewer students than it had a fortnight ago. The immediate cause of the trouble was the suspension of two Communist students, Jack Copenhaver and Henry Forblade.

The following report of the strike was written by Lucien Koch, director, by request of the editor of The Nation, for publication in that journal.

"The basic issue of the strike... was not student representation (as was claimed by striking students) but an attempt to force the school to abandon its non-factional position and to adopt the position of the Communist Party. That not all the strikers were Communists nor even completely aware of the aims of the two students against whose suspension they protested is merely testimonial to the clever strategy of the Communist group in bringing extraneous issues to the fore.

"The strike was not a spontaneous outburst of student indignation but was a well-planned move led by the two suspended students and going back many months. We have on file an affidavit from a member of our community who last August heard these two students and a third one discussing plans for seizing control of the school. About the same time one of our teachers was told by a former student, a member of the Communist Party, that a student strike was scheduled for the coming school year to bring the school to its knees. The report on the strike submitted by our students organization these students carried on... Continued page Three
A SUMMER CAMP FOR WORKERS' CHILDREN

By BILL REICH, TEACHER OF LABOR EDUCATION AT COMMONWEALTH

To outward appearances the mill villages surrounding Marion, N. C., are similar to hundreds of other southern textile villages. There is, however, in Marion a unique institution. Near the railroad track, on a hill, is a little barn gaily decorated in which a group of workers' children make toys, paint pictures, model clay, play games, or read in their embryo library. This group of children was organized by Miss Agnes Sailer in conjunction with Pioneer Youth as one of the devices for keeping up the morale of the workers after the disastrous Marion strike of 1929. The project was so successful that for the summer of 1931 an experimental camp was planned. I volunteered to help the children organize and build their camp.

When I arrived in Marion I found the children eager to begin work on the camp. We met in the barn which served as their toy shop and all afternoon discussed plans for the venture. Since the camp was to be in the virginal wilderness the group decided that only the older children should go first and prepare for the younger children who could come later. This was not much to the liking of the younger group but they acquiesced since the toy shop was to be open to them each morning until they could come to camp.

The next day we started to gather materials and supplies. Our funds were limited so we had to salvage as much material as possible from the village dump heaps. Iron for a stove was obtained as a pile of discarded road signs made excellent roofing. Blankets were obtained from home, tools were borrowed, and tin dishes and kettles were purchased. With this array of materials we started for the woods, eleven boys and three girls.

The site selected for the camp was on a spur of the Blue Ridge Mountains on land owned by a blacklisted mill worker. The location was almost ideal: plenty of pure, cool spring-water, easily available; a bounteous supply of apples, wild berries and plums; an abundance of logs, flat stones, and clay for building; a small stream suitable for a swimming pool; complete isolation from intruders; comparative freedom from insects; and a high altitude which insured exhilarating coolness. A nearby mill proved valuable in supplying cheap lumber, slabs and sawdust.

The first day in camp was spent building immediate necessities. John had seen on a neighboring farm a runway for spring-water so he assumed the job of constructing a similar one for the camp. George remembered how his father had made a furnace for evaporating sorghum molasses. With the aid of several other children he had an excellent stove made by suppertime. Other children grabbed axes and saws and cleared the site selected for the bunkhouse.

By evening we were voraciously hungry. "Who will cook supper?" Nearly all volunteered so lots had to be drawn to decide on the cooks. "After supper who will wash the dishes?" Nell suggested that each person do his own work. This met with the approval of the group and was tried out for several days. Individualism reigned supreme. It soon became evident that co-operation and division of labor were necessary to insure order and efficiency. Thereupon a schedule was devised. Various duties were defined and assigned to five squads: cooking, dishwashing, wood-creating, laundering, and cleaning. Squads were changed twice a week.

Since shelter from the elements was immediately necessary we decided to build the first bunkhouse of rough pine boards which could be obtained quickly and cheaply. A plan for the building was drawn up but it was so vague that, in general, the building, like Topsy, "just grew." It emerged as a long enclosed structure, on stilts to protect from dampness and rattlesnakes, with a porch extending its length. This porch was used as a dining room. The children worked avidly on the construction of this building, some carrying lumber, some hammering, some sawing, others measuring and leveling. Within three days the building was suitable for living quarters but several days more were required to add all the finishing touches: shelves, benches, chairs, tables, and bunks. As the size of the group increased another building was necessary. To fulfill this need a log cabin was constructed. All the materials for this cabin except the nails were obtained from the surrounding forest. The children enjoyed encampment and took great pride in their finished buildings.

Planning and cooking meals was the one "duty" which all children were eager to perform. Our limited budget was an incentive to devising meals as cheaply as possible and to studying the relative cost of food per unit of nutrient value. The chief staple food purchased were flour, lard, salt pork, sugar, beans and milk. A good proportion of the diet consisted of berries and apples obtained for the picking.

By experimentation, accurate proportions were worked out for the camp recipe book and the children soon became adept at serving nourishing and palatable meals.

During the first days in camp a stream about a mile away was used for bathing. The water was muddy and much time was consumed in making the trip. "Let's dig a swimming pool closer to camp," remarked George one day as we were trudging wearily to the creek after a hard day's work. "We can pull up the branch at the camp," suggested James. This suggestion was carried out: a suitable place was found, underbrush removed, roots grubbed, and a dam constructed of earth, logs and stone. Soon a clean pool of mountain water was ready to be used for swimming.

The children were exceedingly ingenious in creating all kinds of play devices. Wagons were made of lum­ber, tires, and two wheels, and served as carts or coaches; hoops were made from hickory poles and locust pegs; baseball bats, swings, rafts, merry­go-rounds, tree-houses, in fact every imaginable kind of plaything was made during the course of the summer. They took great delight in sleeping in the rude tree-houses that they constructed.

The Marion strike had been the most dramatic incident in the lives of the children, and the leader of the strike the most vivid personalities with whom they had ever come in contact. Consequently, when asked what kind of stories they wanted they were unanimous in desiring to learn more about the labor movement and its leaders. Books such as Coleman's "Pioneers of Freedom," Mother Jones' "Autobiography," Sinclair's "Jimmie Higgins" and Lin's "New Workers' Primer" filled this need to some extent. The children were quick to grasp the bearings between labor struggles of the past and the one through which they had been. During none of the discussions was the problem arose: "Why can't we do something for the Negroes in Marion?" remarked one of the boys. "What could we do to help them?" I asked. "We could take colored members into our club," suggested another. After much debate this suggestion resulted in an invitation to two Negro boys to join the club. One of them came to camp where he was readily accepted by the group. He had keen intelligence and drawing ability being much admired. However, there was some resentment on the part of the community against the mixing of the races. During a

Continued page Four
Commonwealth College
Fortsightly

PRINTED AT COMMONWEALTH
BY STUDENT AND TEACHER LABOR

VOL. VIII., No. 20 December 15, 1932

Published twice a month at Mena, Arkansas, by Commonwealth College. Subscription one dollar a year. Entered as second class matter January 30, 1928, at the post office at Mena, Arkansas, under Act of August 24, 1912. Signed articles express only individual opinions. Editors, particularly of labor and farmer papers, are welcome to make free use of materials appearing in this publication. Any interested the Commonwealth College Fortsightly 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 Ozarkas, the southernmost range of the Alleghenies, where it operates agricultural and other industries by means of the part-time work of students and teachers.

Commonwealth is the only institution for higher education where both teachers and students earn their maintenance by part-time labor while engaged in academic work.

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

Commonwealth is a non-sectarian, non-factional institution. It sponsors no particular schemes, political or ecclesiastic dogma. It holds that democracy is the best means of scientific experimentation, carries the best hope of adjustment or solution of social problems.

STRIKE OVER SCHOOL GOES ON WITH WORK

Continued from page One
attacks on teachers whom they did not consider sufficiently "labor-minded."

Where the explosion for the behavior of the Communist group was derived, we do not know.

"Despite this questionableness toward the school which was domiciling them, Commonwealth hesitated to appear arbitrary in curbing their exuberance, since the tradition of academic and organizational freedom is such a strong one on the campus.

"This liberality on the part of the Association was mistaken for weakness by the students in question. They thereupon intensified their program of "rule or ruin." Later events, as they unfolded in the strike, showed that they were ready to resort even to physical force and vandalism to achieve their ends.

"While this program was under way, the 'conspirators' naturally seized on every opportunity to engender bitter feelings against the Association of permanent members. Incoming students (a majority of the student body this fall) were 'rushed' and filled with propaganda against the 'bosses,' who, incidentally, give their services without compensation to maintain the Association. With an ingenuity which might better have been exercised against some capitalist exploiter, they turned their fervor into playing on the idealism and class loyalties of sincere but inexperienced youths, many of them newly enrolled in the radical ranks.

"Rather curiously, this group which advocates the necessity of stern discipline from above, maneuvered itself on every possible occasion into the position of sponsor of additional student participation in the administration of the College, thereby attracting a certain following which was not aware of their real aims. The issue of student participation is no new one at Commonwealth, but has never been the occasion for serious friction before.

"The constitution of the Commonwealth College provides for student eligibility to membership after six quarters of attendance, and at various times a considerable proportion of the memberships have been held by students. Lately, on account of economic conditions, which make long attendance more difficult, the ratio of student members has become smaller, and plans have been under consideration for reducing the period for eligibility. Assuming good faith on the part of all of the community, there is no reason why the problem need be an insurmountable one.

"The final straw on the part of the 'conspirators' was an organized attempt to force the Association to eliminate certain teachers whose political views did not square with the brand of Marxism held by the protesting students, who were critical of the strike. It is the fact that the teacher upon whom the attack was centered was upheld by every member of his class and was teaching a subject which none of the objectors was required to take.

"Such unpleasant conduct being especially disruptive in a small educational community, isolated from urban contacts and dependent on its own social life, the Association was finally compelled to accept the challenge. Its action consisted of suspending until the end of the quarter for 'uncommunal behavior' the two Communist students who were chiefly responsible.

"Far from accepting this suspension, the two students remained on the campus for several days to create more dissension, whip up emotion and play at revolution. The situation which had developed cannot be correctly understood without placing proper emphasis on the fact that the two students were the leaders of a group which had been created among a group which found a strike more exciting than studies and which, in its state of mind, was led to believe that the struggle was being waged over its rights versus those of the Association.

"The strikers, under order of the 'strike committee,' broke locks of the college buildings, printed a newspaper, held a strike meeting in the hall, the library, the workshop, and other college buildings and blocked the public mail highway, holding Association members virtual prisoners. The college truck was put out of commission. A Communist Party member took over management of industrial work, and the strikers otherwise assumed control of the school.

"To protect its educational plant, there was no course open to the Association except to call in legal assistance. This was only done, however, after the insistent declarations of the two suspended students that they would leave under no other conditions. Charges against them were not pushed following their departure to a hard-earned martyrdom. Their freedom was supposedly to be granted them reluctantly, but with no other cause open to their pride.

"The whole episode was an unfortunate one, but there was no alternative once the matter had gone so far, it seems. Damaging as it is to the work we are trying to do, it will have to be charged up to experience, which, we trust, will give wise counsel to our future policies.

"The experience will undoubtedly be more difficult for the public to understand than for those who knew the workings of our community, normally a delightful place but occasionally suffering from its concentrated but not thoroughly integrated varieties of radicalism. We feel very sorry that the followers of the Communist Party on the campus have not been content with the work we are trying to do, it will have to be charged up to experience, which, we trust, will give wise counsel to our future policies."

DIRECTOR LUCIEN KOCH RETURNS FROM EASTERN TRIP

After two months in New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia and other cities of the East, Lucien Koch is back at our college with a very favorable account of conditions in those centers, where it would seem, there is still a depression even though all election returns are in.

Lucien is taking over his job as manager of the carpenter crew immediately. During the past months, he has been director as well as acting-director. He does a job as acting-director David Englestein refuses to function longer. He plans a trip to Chicago sometime during the winter quarter.
SUMMER CAMP FOR CHILDREN

Continued from page Two

baseball game between the camp and a neighboring school the teacher bid on the colored boy from playing. The game was finished without him but the rest of the series was cancelled.

Practically every form of activity was given a tryout during the summer. A play about the Marion Massacre was developed and dramatized. Rhythms were an especial delight of the younger children and the older ones too after their reticence had been overcome. When poster paints and brushes were provided, the smooth white boards of the house became covered with gay pictures and the porch posts were converted into fiery totem poles. The melodies of labor songs and native 'ballads' were always in the air and the camp was a local of the Progressive Farmers' League.

The children attended the weekly entertainments of this organization and often participated in its debates. Such questions as 'Resolved: A Farmer-Labor Party is needed in North Carolina' were debated.

The camp, as an experiment, proved so successful that it is to be continued permanently. During the summer of 1932 thirty children attended camp for eight weeks. Activities similar to those of the summer were carried on. Two new buildings were constructed: a large open dining hall and a weather-proof building to be used as a storeroom and library. A large garden was planned for next year so that the children may raise their own vegetables.

The expense of the project was small. Meals averaged about four cents each, while the total cost of building materials and equipment amounted to less than $100 for the two summeres. Except for a very small amount contributed by the children most of the funds for this venture came from the Pioneer Youth organization in New York.

What were the worthwhile outcomes of this project? (1) The children have a camp which is really theirs; they have built it from the ground up. Camp life provides them with opportunities to take initiative and assume responsibility, thus encouraging social growth through concrete opportunities for the exercise of social habits. (2) New vistas have been opened to the children: creative activity has led to the discovery of unsuspected talents and to the increased self-respect and self-confidence that comes with the realization of new powers. (3) Discussions of labor leaders and problems has aided in developing an understanding of the place of labor in the modern world and in giving a sense of its dignity. The children are becoming militant.

The Labor Alliance, the Industrial Workers of the World, the early labor publicity the rise of the Socialist party, the development of syndicalist and Anarchist movements, etc.

Social Psychology. H. Lee Jones. A study of social institutions and the relationship of the individual to them. The family, the political groupings and workers' organizations will be given emphasis. The aim of the course will be to help students interpret the problems they meet and to function more effectively in a worker's world.

Farm Problems. Clay Fulfes. An inquiry into the present economic plight of the American Farmer and an attempt to indicate the way out. It will embrace these three major divisions: 1. How the farmer, once regarded as the proud personifier of economic independence, has been subjugated and brought under the capitalist yoke; 2. the general and specific social effects of the capitalist's control of the farmer; 3. the way out, under which proposed measures of 'relief' by capitalist grace will be contrasted with a revolutionary program aiming at complete emancipation.

Labor Education. Bill Reich. A survey of existing workers' educational institutions with reference to curricula, methods of teaching, organization, finances, students, faculty, and equipment. Laboratory work will be analyzed and discussed.


Labor Journalism. William Cunningham. News writing, feature writing, editorial writing, letters to the editor, make-up, headline writing, publicity. Writing for the labor press. A study of various labor papers. Writing the propaganda article. Establishing and editing labor journals. The labor union organization. The political organs, etc.

Public Speaking. David Englestein. This is primarily a practical course in speaking. Extemporaneous and prepared talks, symposia and debates, and class discussions and criticism on subjects of vital interest to workers are the concrete methods used to develop the labor student's effectiveness as a soap-boxer, organizer or lecturer.

Medieval and Modern History. David Englestein. A brief survey will be made of the system of feudalism, the social classes, the conflicts and institutions based on this land system. Stress will be placed on the modern era beginning with the commercial revolution and traced down through the industrial revolution up to the opening of the 20th century. The central theme will be the rise and decline of the bourgeoisie and the struggles of the working classes, nationally and internationally. The analysis of our present capitalistic set-up will be based on Marxism.

Modern Imperialism. Mildred Price. A study of imperialist penetration in Asia, Latin America and Africa. The world war; the anti-imperialist movement and Soviet Russia. The method used will be a critical survey of present-day imperialist conflicts followed by an examination of their historical backgrounds.

SUMMER CAMP FOR CHILDREN

Continued from page Two

November 15, 1932

TWELVE COURSES TO BE GIVEN NEXT TERM

Continued from page One

STUDENT BODY GIVES VERSION OF "STRIKE"

Continued from page One

traveled hundreds of miles, were laid aside in the giddy whirl of excitement. ... Monday came and the situation steadily grew tense; the Association found it necessary to call in outside forces unless it wished to give over control of the entire college to the strike committee. Legal action was approved by the minority who believed the college to be in imminent danger and wished the continuance of their class. ... "Opposition students requested others to remain, pointing out that they were leaving the problem unsolved; showing them that they were running away from the issue, the profitable student revolution for which they thought their unsuccessful fight had been made."