Preparations Made For Winter Quarter

Teachers and students at Commonwealth are scrubbing floors, burning trash, raking leaves, and planning schedules in preparation for the winter quarter beginning January 2. Students, old and new, are conferring with teachers upon the problem: "What shall I take?"

The power saw whines and screams each afternoon over its pile of hickory and gum poles. Now that the water system is thawed out the pump motor is thumping once more, and the washing machines are at work.

A gasoline pump is being installed, so that Commonwealth automobiles may be filled with less waste than attended the old method of gallon can and funnel. The little "gas house" will now be only a kerosene house.

Work will soon start upon a large stone oven, to be built off the kitchen. It will be heated by a gasoline burner and will bake the college bread much more efficiently than does the kitchen range. This range is likewise to be rejuvenated by the installation of a gasoline burner. The substitution of gasoline for coal will, according to Bernice Allen, kitchen foreman, greatly increase the efficiency of the cooking staff.

A team of heavy mules and a new wagon have been purchased, and many improvements are being made on the college farm. Acres of brush and oaks have been cleared, and new fences are being built. A new barn and chicken house will be built this spring near the creek, so that it will not be necessary to have any livestock upon the campus.

The newest building upon the campus is the pump house, which is not yet painted. The potato cellar under one of the dormitories is not large enough to take care of the crop planned for next year, and a stone potato house, of fairly large dimensions, will soon be under construction, provided expected funds come in.

With its improved equipment, Commonwealth will be able to do more farming during the coming season than ever before.

FARMERS RESTLESS, GUESTS ARE TOLD

Neighbors Wade Through Snow to Attend Christmas Entertainment

The workers and farmers will not long go naked or hungry without doing something about it," David Englestein, Commonwealth history teacher, told neighbors who gathered for the annual Christmas program at Commonwealth last week. "This is not merely my opinion," David said. It is the opinion of a prominent conservative, published in the last issue of your own newspaper, The Mena Star."

He told them that the recent hunger march and the Farmers' Relief Conference in Washington were symptoms of the growing restlessness on the part of the farmers and workers. "A Folk County farmer, one of our neighbors, went to the Conference," he said.

The second largest snow in ten years did not keep people away from the entertainment. The audience was made up, for the most part, of young people, and filled the Commons to capacity.

The program included a one act play, a "tap dance," and various labor and Christmas songs. Clay Folk, native Arkansan, and teacher of farm problems, acted as Santa Claus and distributed candy to the guests.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY QUIET

The week between Christmas and New Year's Day was a quiet one at Commonwealth. Most of the students and several teachers were away. Entertainments and parties were held; packages from home were opened and shared. It is said that several rabbits were badly frightened by Commonwealth hunters. Weather provided the only real novelty by turning so warm that the snow of the week before was melted, and proletarian winter underwear rendered unnecessary.
FARMERS LEARN ABOUT CONGRESS

For the first time in history, 250 farmers met Congress face to face without high-salaried farm leaders or lobbyists standing between to beseech and divert their purpose. Whether they were dairymen from the East, or share croppers and tenant farm hands of the Midwest, fruit raisers from the Pacific coast, or diversified agriculturists from the North, they had one interest in common: "how to protect our homes and raise our standard of living."

Their purpose was to demand immediate action. Determined to stop ruthless pressure from creditors threatening to sweep them from land and homes, they gathered at the nation's capital to discuss and formulate demands for a national program of relief.

This involved consideration of the following: no evictions, a moratorium on debts which farmers cannot pay, and cash relief to stop hunger. Farmers are at the end of the rope, in a desperate condition, and they are in a militant mood. They are broke because farm prices have reached hardpan. At the same time food prices for city workmen have dropped very little. Crops rot in fields while workers go hungry. What is sold goes for a trifle — not enough for the farmer to have a decent standard of living, let alone attempt to pay off debts, loans and interest charges.

In fiery speeches, vigorous language and homespun oratory, each farmer delegate presented a report of economic conditions in the section of the country he represented.

After each state delegation had reported, the Conference formulated a seven-point program, and presented it through Congress to the House and the Senate for legislation on the basis of these demands.

Through this program for relief, the farmers reminded Congress that cancellation should begin at home. Already a large number of evictions and foreclosures have been prevented by strength of numbers. Now they asked Congress to make legal their actions and the action of the farmer who stayed on his land. They warned against "farm leaders" and politicians who, in the face of social calamity, dare to talk of "surplus," dare to base legislation on a theory of reduction of acreage that will fit the present starvation markets — and finally, dare to advocate the alienation of our scientific advances in farming, recommending a return to a primitive, self-sufficing form of peasant farming.

While these demands presented to the "lame duck" Congress have failed to bear fruit, the farmers are not discouraged. They propose to continue their struggles, pressing for local demands from state and county officials. Though they left Washington disillusioned with Congress, they took with them the knowledge of a new power in their hands — mass action and solidarity. They returned home determined to resist eviction, foreclosures, and sheriff sales, regardless of whether such action was legal. For they are firm in their conviction that moral and human rights have precedence in a national emergency, in face of this social calamity which they did not cause.

Why are farmers beginning to fight?

The ten years of post-war depression, in the last three years intensified by the world economic crisis, has sharpened the oppression of the farmer. In Alabama 55,000 Negro sharecroppers' cabins were deserted last year. This summer in a single day 40,000 Mississippi farms were placed on the auction block for tax delinquencies. Last week 2,000,000 acres were foreclosed in the state of South Dakota. This is only a glimpse of the effect of the crisis on the farmers.

The radicalization of the farmer is going ahead rapidly, and the dispossessed city worker finds an ally in the revolutionary class struggle. This was demonstrated in the marketing strikes in the Northwest, chiefly in Iowa and Minnesota, when city workers came to the assistance of the farmers, and the farmers in turn aided the city unemployed with food and milk.

The agrarian aspect of the revolutionary movement has until recent years been deferred, or if neglected or ignored. But the events of the past year have called national attention to the farmer's militancy. Such spontaneous movements as occurred during the summer dramatized their plight, and indicated confusion run chaotic until given guidance and direction.

The Farmers' National Relief Conference was the expression of the need for a united front movement on a national basis. It was the outcome of the mass meeting of several thousand farmers from eleven states who gathered at Sioux City, Iowa, during the Governors' Conference. Dissatisfied with the set of cleverly phrased promises given them by the Governors, these rank and file sons of the soil saw the necessity for a national program of immediate demands, and issued a call. Committees of action were formed through 36 states, rallying around these demands.

That this movement is a growing force is shown by the fact that the four principal demands have been adopted by 'committees of action' within all, reformist farm organizations by rank and file members, despite 'top leadership' opposition.

Listening to report after report at the Conference in Washington, one is convinced that the majority of farmer delegates are approaching their problems aware that their misery is caused by the "profit system" and are basing their program on this knowledge.

Copies of the two skits recently published in the Fo'nightly, "Risen from the Ranks" and "Until the Mortgage is Due" will be mailed free on request of a three cent stamp.

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Students Is Students
(From the Baltimore Evening Sun)

The students of Commonwealth College, which is situated in Mena, Ark., have gone on strike. Their reason for striking is that they detect a "non-co-operative attitude" in the faculty.

We have never ceased to marvel at the mere existence of Commonwealth College, an institution which is unlike any other place of learning ever heard of. And certain members of its faculty are particularly dear to us. Readers of The Evening Sun may recall the occasional dissertations of Mr. Clay Fulks, a member of the faculty, on the art of civilization as it is practiced in Arkansas. And they will recall an article by Mr. Harold Coy, another member of the faculty, describing his visit of mercy to the coal-mining region of West Virginia. That article was particularly noteworthy for its description of a philosophical encounter with a mine superintendent, who demanded what I thought of the American flag and of "God Almighty." Had I said I believed in God, I would have been smacked for being a liar; had I declared I didn't, I would have been punished as an athiest, and were I to qualify my answer, asserting, in the manner of Einstein, that my God was the God of Spinoza, doubtless I would have been put down as a quibble and punished for my trouble. So I reserved comment, and got the inevitable sore jaw for my silence.

It is hard to see how a faculty composed of gentlemen like the Messers. Fulks and Coy could be accused of a "non co-operative attitude," especially by a body of students drawn from the class-conscious proletariat. Casting about desperately for an explanation, we have concluded that even a class-conscious student body composed wholly of serious thinkers must sometimes kick over the traces. At Mena, no doubt, a student strike, whether with or without the hunger feature, has many of the characteristics of a football rally or a raid on a movie palace at some of our more conventional universities.

PREPARATIONS MADE FOR WINTER QUARTER
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in its history. The ambition of the farm crew is to provide vegetables and fruits to the amount of seven or eight thousand quarts for the college cannery, besides potatoes, corn, hay, etc.

Society Notes

Winter days and nights have their influence upon Commonwealth society. A sleet storm affects behavior, both social and anti-social. Cold feet become a topic of conversation, and the art of fire building receives new impetus. Speculation is rife as to the possibility of finding pitch pine in the timber across the creek.

A cold and raw day is declared to be a good day for rabbits, upon the theory that it is a bad day for everything else. The two target rifles upon the campus are oiled and transported into the key woods, but the rabbit population shows no sharp decline, ordinarily.

Kerosene consumption rises rapidly. There are still Commoners who hold to the opinion that ice-coated logs will burn if they are thrust into a stove and anointed with oil in sufficient quantities, and this belief will persist, in all likelihood, through the next two or three months, in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

Gum, hickory, oak and maple look alike to the newcomer from the East, whose only experience with timber has been in Central Park. But a few cold days educate. The best and the rarest of all fuel wood is pitch pine. It is properly cut into small pieces the size of one's finger. It is heavy and smells like turpentine.

Oak is perhaps the next best. "Split fine" it is used in the kitchen stove. But unsplittable blocks of oak go to heating stoves and fireplaces. Their size, greenness and wetness determine their proper use. Hickory is excellent wood. Green and wet it will burn very well. In an open fireplace it entertains by giving off showers of harmless sparks. A maple stick burns well, hissing and foaming at the ends.

Gum, however, is the bane of the tenderfoot. Green and wet it serves as a fire extinguisher. Dry and seasoned it burns rapidly, giving off little heat. It is the most common of all woods in these hills.

The perplexity of the new student can well be imagined. His stove will behave splendidly at one time and miserably at another. He is impatient of instruction, unwilling to learn the complicated technique of fire-building, inclined to give it all up and go to the library. But give him a couple of months, and he has an eye out for pitch pine. He returns from a walk in the woods with an armful of pine knots which he hides under his bed. He is becoming a "semi-pioneer."

Many odd customs prevail at Commonwealth. For instance, a new-comer would be at a loss to account for the fact that trousers are often patched not at the knee or seat but over the calf of the leg. What strange form of activity could be responsible for wear at this point?

The explanation is simple. Many of the dormitory rooms are heated by small stoves which, properly fueled, become hot very quickly. Men habitually stand with their backs to the fire. Thus the strange patches.

Most young men have a secret ambition to grow whiskers, but metropolitan life is unfriendly in this respect. Few have the courage to walk along Fifth Avenue with a week's growth. At Commonwealth, however, far out in the Arkansas hills, there comes a long sought opportunity. Scrappy, brown fuzz on the young chin does not draw ridicule. The razor is laid aside for a week, two weeks. Great hopes are entertained for this fuzz. Someday it will look like something, maybe.

But the mirror, day by day, is discouraging. A few long hairs appear — so few and so fine that they seem to fade. Where is this distinguished foreign appearance one had hoped for? Some sort of dye might help matters, but who will risk being caught dyeing seventeen sickly whiskers? At last there can be no more doubt in the matter. Out of the mirror looks not a distinguished foreigner but the Forgotten Man.

A hen nested under a cottage and brought into the world, entirely upon her own responsibility, two chickens. The storm came and she had to be caught and cooped, but she remains resentful of human intervention.

Sleet bows young pines to the ground, magnifies wires, muffles the college bell so that it gives forth only feeble "pank, pank." The leafless eaves. A cold mist hides the mountains. A rooster stands on one foot while he warms the other with his breast feathers. The sunny South!
in Congress..." The school will co-operate with its neighbors in raising enough potatoes to inaugurate a co-op market;... 6. "A 24-inch buzz saw with seven-horsepower gas engine now drives Commonwealth's logs in short order." "With youth as a common denominator the industrial equation which now represents the student as the algebraic x can be solved by equal co-operation," No. 8: "Students here dress to suit a definite phase of their environment rather than a Parisian or Chicagoan dictate." Ko. 2. "This paper as one-half of the school's fourth couple to marry on the campus. Flora, the bride, is the college nurse, and Jim alternates between library work and hauling stovewood. Murphy's home is in Gardner, Mass. While going to high school there, he worked six hours a day in a chair factory, and learned the meaning of "lay-off." Jim worked in a stove factory one year and spent part of another looking for jobs in Camden, Philadelphia and Manhattan. He came to Commonwealth last spring and is interested in writing for the FORTNIGHTLY.

RAY AND CHUCKY TO LEAVE FOR CHANGE OF SCENE

Raymond Koch and Charlotte Moskowitz, his wife, will be away from Commonwealth during the next several months, according to the present plans. O. Hittenrauch will take Charlotte's place as executive secretary during her absence.

"Ray" and "Chucky" have been at Commonwealth for a long time and feel that they will be benefited by a change of scene. Raymond was a student for six years, and has been teaching economics for the past two years. During four of his eight years at Commonwealth he has been a member of the Executive Committee (formerly the Board of Trustees.) He has been industrial manager for three years.

As a boy, Joe Schmidt used to sit on the doorstep of his father's Pennsylvania farm house and talk to the tramps that came to find a place to sleep in the hay. They told him about riding freights, about the flat fields of Kansas and the Midwest. Joe had to order his wanderlust during an interlude of railroad work in Philadelphia, but later he went to California, Central America, Canada and Mexico. He went as a tourist, as a book salesman, as a farm hand and a woodsman. During this time he managed to attend college in the Quaker City, later setting in Cincinnati and becoming a baksery porter. There he continued his self-education, attending open forums and a people's school, and doing much reading. Tall, mustached, Joe is the college baker and lives with three room-mates in a dormitory called "Union Square."