COMMONWEALTH MUST HAVE $2,500 IF IT IS TO OPERATE DURING THE COMING YEAR

Prices are going up, and the pledges and donations that have come in during the first quarter of 1933 are only 85 per cent of what they were for the first quarter of 1932.

To make matters worse, Commonwealth suffered from the bank holiday. A Mena bank has not yet released all the money deposited there and it seems that this money will not be available soon.

This means that the friends of the school must send cash immediately and keep sending it throughout the year if the school is to continue.

No other school operates upon only $2,500 a year from the outside. (Commonwealth "got by" during 1932 upon $1,737.61 in donations and $691 paid upon pledges, but prices in 1933 are going to be, on an average, much higher than prices for 1932.)

No other school provides young workers with an opportunity to prepare themselves for service in the labor movement, at a cost as low as $40 per quarter, $120 for nine months. Cheap education is not the purpose of Commonwealth, but workers' education must be very inexpensive if workers are to attend.

The school was established on capital equipment grants that totaled less than $35,500.

Every reader of the Fortnightly knows why Commonwealth can get along on about one-tenth the amount of money that other schools of the same size require. Nobody at Commonwealth draws a salary. Nobody makes a profit from the school. Everybody does industrial work to keep it going.

The industrial work done at Commonwealth during 1932 was worth $14,428.75, if it is valued at only 25 cents per hour. It is this huge donation of labor which enables the school to get along upon very little.

But that little is necessary. Sugar, flour, coffee and other foodstuffs cannot be grown upon the 320-acre farm which the college operates. Overalls and shoes cannot be made here. The school, 70 per cent self-supporting, must have cash donations immediately, to help with the other 30 per cent.

It is to the person of small means that Commonwealth must apply for help. Most of the maintenance money is sent in small amounts — $100, $50, $25, $1. The life of the school depends, not upon huge grants from wealthy patrons, but upon the small donation that you are able to make.

You may feel an impulse to send in a few dollars, but since the amount is small you decide that it is of no great importance whether or not you act upon that impulse. Actually it is of the utmost importance. Upon your decision and the decisions of a few others no better off than you are depends the fate of the school.

Money goes farther at Commonwealth than elsewhere. That dime you spent for the piece of pie that gave you indigestion would have purchased one meal at the present time, with the struggle just getting under way. If you have not yet given the school financial aid, this is certainly the time to begin.

All persons sending in donations of $2.00 or more will be enrolled as Friends of Commonwealth and will be sent the Fortnightly without extra charge.

The next few issues of the Fortnightly will tell you whether or not funds are in sight to open for the eleventh school years next fall. However, the decision is with you, not with those at the school.

If you start tearing out this coupon now, before something else catches your attention, continuation of the school next year is assured.

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FOOTNOTE

COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE TREASURER
MENA, ARKANSAS

Please enroll me as a FRIEND OF COMMONWEALTH.

I enclose $............... which is a lot of money to me right now, but I know that labor education needs it worse than I do.

I will send $............... in 1934 and $............... in 1935, and more if I can afford it.

Signed...........

Address

ADDRESS
COMMONWEALTH'S FIRST TEN YEARS: AN APPRAISAL

By HAROLD COY
Instructor, Commonwealth College

Most novel projects, whether they be poetry magazines, third parties or legislative programs to restore prosperity, run a substantial risk of withering and dying within a year. When Commonwealth was founded, there was no good reason, apparently, why a sensible person should give it more than an even chance of surviving an academic year.

It seemed almost quixotic to imagine that a school for workers, starting without financial backing and determined to divest itself of the conventional props of education—degrees, credits, expensive equipment, dependence on large benefactions—could flourish and grow. To imagine that such a school could, in addition, afford young men and women a chance to earn their board and room while in attendance and play host to heretical social and economic ideas, seemed preposterous.

Nevertheless ten years have passed, and while Commonwealth is not allowed an instant to forget the struggle for existence, it is still alive. And kicking. It was founded ten years ago last month. The first classes were held ten years ago next October.

To attain the age of ten years is a respectable accomplishment, and celebrated as such, even by movements with as broad a base as Italian fascism, the League of Nations or the Russian Soviet system. For Commonwealth to endure and make progress over such a period seems miraculous. But since this is not an age of miracles, it is plain that there must be reasons for it. What are the strengths of Commonwealth, and (since one must be objective) the weaknesses?

II

As one who shares with Director Lucien Koch the distinction of being an oldest inhabitant (though neither of us are yet grandparents,) it seems to me the strengths of Commonwealth, the survival traits, are to be found in these factors: (1) it permits a worker to attend on a workers' income, (2) it operates only to a very limited extent on a cash economy, producing most of its own commodities and services, (3) it has enlisted a teaching and technical personnel willing to serve without pay and for the fun of the task, and (4) it fills a real growing need, because it knows what it wants in an age of decadence, decay and little faith.

The University of Chicago estimates the average expense to a student of a quarter's attendance at $247, plus $100 tuition. In other words, a student would need at least $1,000 for an academic year. By keeping expenses down to the "low" estimate, he might knock off $200. But $800 would be the irreducible minimum. Obviously few wage earners can save enough for a year's education, let alone a full college course.

Commonwealth's first task, therefore, in providing education for workers, was to make it possible for them to attend. This it has done. For $40 a quarter, $120 an academic year, students get room, board, laundry service and tuition. This doesn't include clothing, but a 90-cent suit of overalls or two will last the year out.

It should be added at this point that students get these things for $40 a quarter, plus 29 hours' work a week at menial tasks. For Commonwealth's unability to bring education within the financial reach of workers is a result of the way it is organized and runs.

III

Commonwealth realized right from the start that it could not count on large and steady sources of income. It realized that for a radical project there are two kinds of yes, lean years and leaner years. The project that depends entirely on contributions may barely scrape by during the lean years and go on the rocks when the others roll around. So Commonwealth determined to has little dependence on outside support. By the toil of its teachers and students it put up its own buildings. It keeps them in repair. It cooks its own meals. It grows its own potatoes. It prints its own Fortnightly. It milks its own cows. It washes its own clothes, and if it gets time it irons them. There is no hired man at Commonwealth. We work that we may eat that we may study that we may help build the new social order.

We still have to raise $2,500 a year to keep going. But suppose we had to raise a quarter of a million, as many rather small colleges do. The smallness of our budget means relative security.

Being located in the Arkansas woods helps. "You are so far away from everything," some New Yorkers say, meaning that we are away from New York (for Commonwealth is considerably nearer the center of population than is Manhattan.) There are many advantages, of course, of being located in a big industrial center, but there are also disadvantages. Commonwealth students are not subject to the distractions of a big city in their day-by-day study, yet they are always enterprising enough to send a delegation by freight or by thumb to an outstanding labor meeting or if it is half way across the continent. Living is much cheaper in the country. Fuel, at Commonwealth, is to be had for the cutting. The higher fixed charges of operation in a city might more than once before this have terminated Commonwealth's life.

IV

"But will teachers teach for nothing?" people asked, before Chicago had demonstrated the affirmative on a much larger scale than Commonwealth could hope to do. Commonwealth teachers don't teach for nothing* because they shrink from the pollution of money, but because it is a necessary part of putting the Commonwealth idea across. Some day it is hoped that they will get a small allowance, but that is even more hypothetical than a tax anticipation warrant. After all, Commonwealth teachers and resident workers are no worse off than most pioneers in the labor movement, who, by and large, are lucky if they keep their ribs from sticking out.

There is an element of potential instability, of course, in having three or four score dissenters and radicals isolated on an Arkansas farm with only one another for company. This has led to many problems and will doubtless lead to more. But despite an occasional flup-up, the administrative life at Commonwealth has a unparalleled charm, which makes one long for the place, whether he departs for a few days or forever.

Community government, which at Commonwealth involves not only educational and social problems, but the operation of an economic enterprise as well, is a perplexing problem. Ten years of experimentation have included virtually everything from a one-man dictatorship to a town meeting form of government. Results seem to indicate that neither extreme will work and that there is least friction when primary responsibility for policies and decisions rests with those whose connection with Commonwealth is reasonably permanent or has been of at least a year's duration.** The factional politics of the labor movement must not be allowed to interfere with the internal administration of Commonwealth. Officers and functionaries should be ultimately responsible

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* Teachers actually get room, board, laundry service and a communal account (tobacco, paper, bread, etc.) average $3 a month.

** Students are eligible for membership in the Commonwealth College Association after the first month of their fourth quarter.
When Old Dick, a Commonwealth mule, died recently, it was apparent that this labor school needed another mule. Marshall Pike, Commonwealth farmer who learned about mules on an Arkansas farm, Bill Cunningham, journalism teacher who learned about mules on an Oklahoma farm, Bob Reed, student who learned about mules on a Texas farm, and Horace Bryan, student who learned about mules in an Arkansas mine, were appointed members of a purchasing committee to buy a new mule.

They went to Fort Smith, which boasts one of the largest mule barns in the world, and there selected, from 400 mules, Jenny, tall and lean, hungry, emotionally stable. She was "shedding good," which proved that she was healthy. Her feet were sound. She had "pumpkin seed" teeth—smooth moutned—which proved that she had passed the first flush of youth. But she looked honest. They bought her for $25.00.

Tobacco, snuff and coffee are the hardest of all things to renounce. They can be got with money. Tobacco as a sort of political economy, as any economist knows, is not necessarily gold nor silver nor the promise of a government to pay. In these hills, eggs are rapidly taking on all the functions of a true currency in the agricultural trades, as a natural exchange in the poverty of the farmers hereabouts. Their one chance of a profitable cash crop disappeared with the fall in the price of cotton. They subsist on a sort of hot pork and corn kind of self-sufficiency, like the pioneers of a century ago, but unlike the latter, they have lost many of the household arts. In lieu of shoes, some of them went through six inches of snow, feet encased in arcs of discarded tire casing.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Woodcuts of Arkansas by Howard Simon, donated by Richard Meyer.

MAGAZINE

Mrs. M. Schlauch

Mrs. Louis D. Brandeis Society.

CASH

Rose Pesotta ............................................ 2.00
Melva Kaplan ............................................ 2.00
F. A. Norman ............................................ 1.00
Harold M. Groves ..................................... 1.00
J. L. Upton ............................................. 1.00
Mrs. J. E. Kirkpatrick ................................ 1.00
Mildred Higgins ....................................... 1.00
Bill Chalmers .......................................... 1.00
L. J. Brown, of Wisconsin ............................. 1.00
E. A. Ross ............................................ 1.50
Sherwood Eddy ......................................... 1.50
Richard Meyer .......................................... 1.50

* Many of them would be scared away if Commonwealth were a factional school.
STUDENTS TO ATTEND LABOR CONVENTIONS

College To Be Represented At Washington and Chicago

A number of Commonwealth students will spend May Day away from the school on trips to labor events.

Van Chase and James Porter were elected Commonwealth delegates to the Continental Congress of Workers and Farmers for Economic Reconstruction, meeting in Washington May 6 and 7. Bud Fallon and Bob Harting will also attend the congress. Libbie Volpie will attend the congress as a delegate from the Socialist local at Commonwealth.

George Horn was elected delegate to the Free Tom Mooney Conference to be held in Chicago April 30, May 1 and 2. Max Shapiro and Mike Wasnack were elected alternates.

Libbie will leave Commonwealth several days before the other delegates to the congress, in order to attend a meeting of the Executive Board of the Progressive Trade Union Educational Committee, of which she is a member. The Board meets at Gillespie, Ill., April 29. While in Illinois she will speak before several labor groups.

Arkansas Workers See Forgotten Man

"The Forgotten Man," a musical skit by Bill Reich, Commonwealth teacher, will be presented at a May Day meeting of miners and farmers at Jenny Lind, Arkansas. The skit was first presented at Commonwealth April 15.

The cast of the skit will go to Jenny Lind in the Commonwealth truck. "The Forgotten Man" will be published in an early issue of the Fortnightly. Extra copies of this skit and two other skits, "Risen from the Ranks," by Harold Coy, and "Until the Mortgage is Due," by William Cunningham, may be had for the asking.

OLD BARN TORN DOWN

The old barn, the last of the buildings which stood on the campus when Commonwealth was established on its present site, was torn down recently and cut into kindling wood.

Pegasus Unshod

HE HAS NOT MADE GOOD

By AGNES CUNNINGHAM

He cuts the grain
And they have bread;
Yet he has not made good
He goes hungry.

He plies the shuttle
And they have cloth;
Yet he has not made good
He weara rags.

He swings his pick
And they have warmth;
Yet he has not made good
He is cold.

History, blundering doit
Slouched in your easy chair,
take care that he does not rise up
And fling his failure in your sleepy face!

Society, mad woman
Murdering your own offspring,
take care that he does not stir
And splash blood on your satin gown!

TO KANSAS AND KANSAS CITY READERS

Lucien Koch, director of Commonwealth, will make his first speaking trip to Kansas City and the State of Kansas beginning May 29. He is open for speaking dates before interested groups during the last ten days in May and during June. He also wishes to get in contact with individuals who will arrange informal discussion groups at their homes or will help him in touch with prospective students and friends of Commonwealth.

Director Koch is speaking on the following topics:

Commonwealth College: The First Ten Years.

The Farmer Becomes Class-Conscious.

What Does America Face?

Non-Factional Labor Education.

Commonwealth needs your help in building up a body of sympathizers in Kansas and Kansas City. Please help make the trip a success by writing to the Executive Secretary, Commonwealth College, Mena, Ark., telling what you can do to arrange meetings and contacts.

CARL BRANNIN TO BE AT SUMMER SESSION

Posters Announcing Program Are Now Being Distributed

Too late for the announcement in the last issue of the Fortnightly of the Commonwealth summer camp, came word that Carl Brannin, co-founder of the Seattle Unemployed Citizens' League, instructor at Seattle Labor College, and writer, will be at Commonwealth the last two weeks in July.

He, like Oscar Ameringer and Nathan Fine, will aid the regular Commonwealth faculty in the educational work scheduled for the summer. Other persons prominent in the labor movement will be at Commonwealth this summer, at dates to be announced later.

Posters announcing the Commonwealth summer session are now being distributed. Friends of the school who have access to bulletin boards where this poster may be placed are asked to write in immediately for copies.

Copies of the announcement contained in the previous issue of the Fortnightly may also be had for the asking. If you know of friends or relatives who are now planning their summer vacation, who have an intelligent interest in what is happening in the world, who cannot afford high-priced summer resorts, send us their names and we shall be glad to furnish them complete information.

Perhaps you would like to distribute announcements of the Commonwealth camp at a meeting of your local union or of any organization to which you belong. Write us immediately, telling how many announcements you will be able to distribute.

You can be of great service to Commonwealth by passing out information concerning the summer camp. Any revenue from this camp goes toward the support of the college. By giving a few hours of your time to the work of distributing announcements you may make a genuine contribution to workers' education.

Pledges and donations are only 60 percent of what they were this time last year. Commonwealth lost money in the bank holiday. The school must have help IMMEDIATELY!