Summer Issue Has Young Writers and New Names


"A Man's House," the lead story, is by Richard Miller, editor of a collection of cat stories published by Double-day, Doran. "The Bums Move," by John Mitchell, is a story of "those withered figures of men that seep out at the edge of the city in the damp precincts of the river." Mr. Mitchell has published widely, lived four years in Europe, and is at present an instructor in fiction in The Writers' School of the New York John Reed Club.

Harlan Crippen, twenty years old and a native of South Dakota, is active in labor organization and is interested in left-wing writing. He appears in this issue with a poem, "A Letter to the President."

Other outstanding poems and stories are: "Jimmie, the Porter," first submitted story by Henry Petersalie; "Whar de White Folk Go?" by C. S. Beeker; "Pop Corn," first published story by Ida Faye Sachs; "Invocation," by Isaac Gerneth; "Complaint to Paul Engel," by Mary Moffat; "Snow," by Tom Bailey; "He Holds Me by the Hand," by I. L. Kissen; "Cut of Spring in the Tall Timber," by George Dixon Snell.

The issue contains 30,000 words, about half the number in an average novel.

The fall number of the magazine, to be issued September 15, will contain an analytical review of Norman Macleod's Norman Macleod, or Nerves and the Revolution, by Samuel Putnam.

According to the editors, they would like to receive some stirring revolutionary writing, though not of the 'sour grapes' variety.
Commonwealth Courses

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the second of the series by Commonwealth instructors describing the courses which they teach.

Labor Orientation
MILDRED PRICE, COURSE DIRECTOR

ALL NEW students at Commonwealth are required to take the Labor Orientation Course, which is complete in one quarter. But the fact that it is a required course does not mean that it is cut and dried, never varying from year to year. It is a flexible, changing course—tending always to meet the needs of the students at any particular time.

An outline of subjects forms the basis of the course, but no discussion which interests the class is ever stifled simply because it wasn't included in the outline. Students feel free to question any lecturer on any statement which they do not understand or agree with. While at times this freedom brings about loud and spirited discussion, it is found that with guidance on the part of the instructor, practically every student takes this opportunity to clear up problems heretofore unsolved in his own mind.

The Labor Orientation Course is taught by all the instructors, but there is one particular instructor who attends all the lectures and not only gives the majority of the lectures but also attempts to tie up the loose ends. He or she links together the events of history, explaining points not made clear by the previous lecture—in other words, aiding the student to understand the philosophy of historical materialism in connection with what he has learned in the class.

The course, in considering so many subjects and in covering history from primitive communism to socialism, cannot possibly give the student a thorough knowledge. It aims only at giving him a general backbone. It opens up a vast new body of knowledge. It whets his appetite for learning more. It teaches him that workers before him have engaged in struggles—that he is a part of a great international movement which has as its goal the abolition of these struggles in the future society.

It is really a working class history course, because there is always the greatest emphasis placed on the way the working class has made its living through the ages, the relation of this class to the property owners, the social institutions that it has affected and been affected by. The immature student, as the quarter progresses, finds himself acquiring a new ideology—an ideology that is becoming divorced from his old way of looking at things. He now sees history and present events in terms of the working class. He feels a compulsion to view everything as the class-conscious worker would view it.

Half of the course is concerned with history up to the beginning of modern capitalism, and the latter half with forces and changes since then. The first lectures are on early family life, the difference between family relations then and now, the origins of religion, private property and the state. The different modes of economy are studied, compared, and an analysis given of their resulting social institutions.

The instructor often raises controversial questions, but the student too, by merely airing his views, rarely fails to receive answers from several people in the class. "What is the difference between primitive communism and socialism in Soviet Russia today?" "Why wasn't it possible historically for Spartacus and his slave followers to defeat the Romans and set up a workers' state?" "Why didn't capitalism come in and what-not, especially in our dance music?" "What sounds should we have?" "Is there any difference between the dance and the rhythm of our dreams?"

The above questions are fair samples of the problems discussed during the course. No student is made to feel that any certain subject is taboo. The Labor Orientation Course acts as an arena where battles can be waged, but they are battles which are waged with words and which always end with some sort of solution. The student has found out that the facts he has acquired, the lessons he has learned, are to be used as equipment in his future work. He has discarded his former ideas of learning for the sake of learning. He has become 'oriented' for the labor movement.

Society Notes

COMMONWEALTH IS SITUATED ELEVEN miles west of Mena, Arkansas, on the Talihina highway. It has twenty-odd buildings, a dozen of cows, and about fifty and a half human beings, all in more or less close proximity to one hundred and sixty acres of college farm. Rural, in other words.

This being the case, Commonwealers seldom go out to seek the thrill, the drama, the excitement befalling the city dweller. The trimming experts are Bernie Stevens, secon of a million wrens and mechanisms; and Madge Cunningham, the lady-in-waiting to Christopher and Sandy, the Arkansas wonder babes.

Bernie, a practical man and much in demand, charges an hour's industrial time for getting one's ears nipped. His view of feudalism? "I'm just don't like it." "Why not establish a Socialists' commune?" Bernie made his living through the years by playing his guitar. The music emanating from between the numbers are Arkansas, the latter half being the greatest struggle in the world. Bernie is a vital, spirited, and much in demand. He has discarded his former idea of learning for the sake of learning. He has become 'oriented' for the labor movement.

Mildred Price, chairman of Commonwealth faculty

Commonwealth College Fortnightly June 15, 1935

This is 1935, AGE OF MECHANIZATION and what-not, especially in our dance (meaning, of course, the Lindy Hop, the Grapevine, Black Bottom and the like). Down here in Arkansas, though, square dancing is still the main event of both indoor and outdoor dance pavilion.

Last Saturday Commonwealth entertained the neighbors with a dance. The orchestra was made up of Neighbor Ridding at the fiddle (Jim House substituting occasionally) and one of the Barber boys at the guitar. The music emanating from these instruments doesn't sound very much like Irving Berlin, and the titles of the numbers are Arkansas Traveler, Devil's Dream, Money Musk, Midnight Breakdown, Limpin' Sally Waiters, and so on.

The Commons was packed almost to its high rafters. Four sets were going strong on the floor and another one set up on the stairs. It was carried on by one or more Commonwealth students.
Students' Experiences

EDITOR’S NOTE: The following account of an Illinois mine tragedy was delivered in the public speaking class at Commonwealth by Clarence BAUSWELL, a member of the Progressive Miners of America, and was later written up by him for the Fortnightly.

This is the second article of a series in which Commonwealth students deal with experiences typical of their backgrounds.

The Moweaqua Mine Disaster

BY CLARENCE BAUSWELL

People who do not know much about mines ask me about mine disasters as soon as they hear I am a miner. Everybody knows about mine explosions, but they do not know very well how a miner looks at them. Because the companies will not spend the money to make the mines reasonably safe for the men who have to work in them, mine accidents are common wherever there are mines. Every miner realizes this, and yet we do not seem to think very much about it. We keep it in the backs of our minds, but I think the thought is always there. The thought, I mean, that we may be burned or buried or crushed at any moment.

The men who went down into the Moweaqua mine just before the explosion, though, probably had this thought quite a ways back in their minds. It was Christmas Eve morning four years ago, this coming Christmas. Fifty-four of them went down to their work singing carols. They were working six hundred and sixty-seven feet beneath the surface. They went down in the cage into the man trips to be taken into their working places. The mule was stubborn. It must have sensed the coming disaster, but was forced to go on against its will.

The explosion occurred when the driver of the first man trip backed his mule into an entry which was filled with gas during the night. The open flame of the driver's carbide lamp caused the accumulated gas to ignite. The other two man trips were caught in the explosion, one on the partent, the other on the main line. There they were found.

As soon as it happened the whistles up above began to blow and the men, women and children rushed to the mine to find out what was wrong. The rescue workers (I was one of them) got safety lamps and went below to help the men entombed in the mine.

We crawled over tons of fallen rock and dug beneath the debris looking for some of the victims. Under the second pile of rock we found twelve bodies still in the cars. They were mangled and burned almost beyond recognition. A little farther on we found the man who was to have played Santa Claus in the program that night. We went on and found fourteen more, as badly burned as the others. One man had his small brother clasped against his chest trying to keep the kid's face from getting burned.

We had to break his arms to separate them.

Some of us were sick and some afraid, because we never knew when someone would hit against a prop and bring down tons of rock to bury us.

We found the small mules. They were swollen to three times their normal size. We put quick lime on them to kill the smell, and when this did not work out as we planned, we tried embalming fluid.

When any of the rescue crew came up from below, the women and girls came rushing up with a question about their husband or father who was one of the missing. We could not give them any answer because we were told not to tell anyone anything. Two little boys whose father was in the explosion stayed in the rescue cars with us for six days, waiting for us to find their father. They slept very little and never shed a tear until they knew he was dead. The women hung around the undertaker's establishment looking at the list of dead which was posted every time a new bunch of men was found. It was the most heart-breaking sight I ever witnessed.

When you are close to a tragedy like this you remember it at night for years afterward and you can't sleep. People will ask a miner, after they hear about an accident like this, why he does not quit the mines. But that is not a solution. All miners cannot quit the mines. We have to fight for the right to work in safety.

In mines where the men are organized into unions the conditions are much safer than in non-union mines because a strong union can force the operator to keep the mine in good repair. The workers are the ones who suffer in the accident. It is they, through their unions, who must see that proper mine laws are passed and that men who are not under the control of the companies are chosen to enforce them.

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VISITORS OF ALL WALKS RIDE IN

Anarchists, Writers, Teachers, Even Honeymooners Look Us Over

Visitors, always a considerable factor in campus life, have been more than usually thick this quarter at Commonwealth. We classify them roughly (in the figurative sense only) in two categories: the sightseers and the guests. The sightseers are the people who come out for an hour or two to have a look around the place; and the guests are those who come for one day, or two, or a week or so. We do our best to treat the sightseers as guests (Southern hospitality), and the guests, to a certain extent, as sightseers (we show them everything there is to see).

The sightseers come from all over the country and are almost daily occurrences. They come by freight, hitch-hike, rickety automobile, and beautiful new car. They are greeted by the student or teacher nearest the point of arrival, and shown around the campus from the guest house to the farm.

Our guest list this quarter included Mr. and Mrs. Myles Horton, Ben Reitman, Louis Mamet, Horace Bryan, Elvira Antijuntti, Mr. and Mrs. Meyer Halushka, Ralph Blount, Eva Cowan, and Harold J. Gibbons.

Myles Horton is the director of the Highlander Folk School at Monteagle, Tennessee, which is doing very effective work in the Southern labor movement. This was Myles Horton's first visit to Commonwealth, but his bride, who was Zilphia May Johnson, was making a return call. She is an accomplished musician.

Louis Mamet, from New York City, whose stories have appeared in the Windsor Quarterly, the Aum, and other magazines, stayed for two days. He answered the questions of the students in the Effective Writing class, and gave the entire group a report of the recent Writers' Congress.

H. L. Mitchell, secretary of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, also addressed the entire college, giving a resume of recent activities of the STFU.

Horace Bryan and Elvira Antijuntti are both former student-Commonweathers. Horace is active in Arkansas labor, and Elvira, just back from California, stays to help with this summer's canning.

The last five names on the list belong to a party of Commonwealth friends from Chicago. Harold J. Gibbons, Executive Secretary of the Chicago Labor College, told of the college's activities there.
BOOK REVIEW

Factory Family and Woman; Susan M. Kingsbury and Mildred Fairchild; Putnam; $3.50. This book is a thorough evaluation of the position of women in the Soviet Union today. Its chief value lies in its comparison of the economic, political and social status of women under the Tsarist regime and under the present Socialist regime. The facts presented are so convincing and inclusive that it is difficult to make out even the smallest case for the old order of things especially as it affected women.

BOOKS NEEDED


PROTESTS URGED IN PLENTYWOOD CASE

Former Commonwealth Student Faces Deportation and Nazi Concentration Camp

Alfred Miller, former student of Commonwealth College, is being held by immigration authorities for deportation to fascist Germany. For the last year and a half Miller has been editor of the Producers News, a militant farm paper in eastern Montana. In this capacity he has carried on a good fight against foreclosures and local relief administration practices. As a result of this the senior case worker in Plentywood, Montana, where the paper was published, was removed from her position. She promised to 'get even' with the editor.

If Alfred Miller is returned to Germany he will with certainty land in a Nazi concentration camp where the worst will be in store for him. Protests should be directed at once to Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, and financial contributions are to be sent to the "Alfred Miller" Defense Committee, Mrs. Grace Henderson, Treasurer, Plentywood, Montana.

[ SUMMER PLANS FROM PAGE 1 ] versitcics of Chicago and Berlin, has written poems, stories and plays for such magazines as the New Freeman, New Republic, and the Saturday Review of Literature. Pauline Schindler has been active on the West Coast as an editor, writer and teacher.

The schedule of the special lecturers is listed below:

July 1-14—David Englestein, former Commonwealth teacher now active in the midwestern labor movement.


July 14-20—Jack Conroy, former editor of the Awl and author of Disturbed and A World to Win.

July 15-28—Ward Rodgers, organizer of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union.


July 21-Sept. 8—Winifred Chapelle, secretary of the Methodist Federation mile hitch-hiking tour to the coast.


July 25-Aug. 9—Carl Hesse, founder and managing editor of the Federated Press.

Aug. 3-4—Ben Botkin, University of Oklahoma professor and authority on Southern Folklore.

Aug. 4-13—Bill Reich, representative of the National Unemployed League.

Aug. 15—Charles J. Finger, Arkansas writer and publisher of All's Well.

Aug. 26-Sept. 8—Ella Reeve Bloor, outstanding farm organizer, active in the American labor movement for the past fifty years.

The Summer Session program is now complete.

[ SOCIETY NOTES FROM PAGE 2 ]

faces shining with both enjoyment and bewilderment. Onlookers are filled with dismay watching a new student dancing his first square dance and getting all tangled up in a do-si-do. For it takes some real Arkansas finesse to follow directions like those:

"Do-si-do, gent's you know, Never git t' heaven till you do jest so! Virat went out, cheat or swing, On t' thi' next an' thi' same dang thing! Log-chain your sweetie an' stay-chain your honey, Double up, boys, git th' worth o' your money!"

Associated Little Magazines

Abbott Cohen, first secretary of Associated Little Magazines, with the recordings of little magazine activities filed a column of each issue of the Fortnightly during the quarter, is on his way to California. Abbott came to Commonwealth as the scholarship secretary of the association. He is determined to see the other half of the country before returning home.

Ted Freedman, Commonwealth staff member, is temporarily assuming responsibility for the secretaryship of the organization and will continue to get out the Little Magazine news column.

Associated Little Magazines now has 15 members and the organization has a sound basis for development. Ted Freedman is formulating plans for the next year, which he is submitting to the membership for approval.

RECESS IS OVER

Lucien Koch, director, and his wife, Irene Merrill, have just returned to Commonwealth after a six-thousand mile hitch-hiking tour to the coast.

Lucien has again assumed his duties as director, and in addition will help the carpenter crew complete the dormitory renovations before the opening of the summer session. Irene Merrill will continue editing The Windsor Quarterly.

[ CONFERENCE FROM PAGE 1 ]

the local police, and they followed the cars of the delegates. The arrangements committee, realizing that the Conference meetings would be interfered with again, passed around the word that all cars should go to the Highlander Folk School at Montague.

At Highlander the neighbors of the school promised to protect the delegates if the Chattanooga disrupters attempted to break up the sessions.

The Conference was attended by many persons well known in the Southern labor movement, and the most important labor groups and organizations in the South were represented. A Conventions Committee was elected to plan another conference next year, which will be held somewhere in North Carolina. Headquarters will also be set up in that state.

The Commonwealth College Experimental Theatre asks all persons interested in helping fight theatre censorship to write George Rochester, foreman of the Grand Jury, City Hall, Los Angeles, demanding prosecution of the editors of Will Ghere, whose production, Till the Day I Die, offended California fascists.