COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE  
FORTNIGHTLY  

VOL. XI, NO. 15  MENA, ARKANSAS: AUGUST 1, 1935  $1.00 A YEAR

**WRITER GOES TO TEST DOWNS LAW**

Conroy, Sentner and Rodgers Summer Lecturers For Fortnight

*When Jack Conroy, novelist and Guggenheim fellow who spent the two weeks of July 13 to 25 lecturing at Commonwealth, left the campus last Thursday, he was on his way to get arrested in Alabama.*

In the company of Bruce Crawford, Nelson Algren, Alfred H. Hirsch, and other well-known writers commissioned by the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, Conroy is going to Birmingham, Alabama, to test the Downs law and arouse public opinion against it.

The Downs law is a Birmingham city ordinance which makes the mere possession of more than a single copy of any radical periodical a crime subject to $100 fine and six months' imprisonment.

The group expects also to see Gov.-

---

**COLLEGE INCREASES TUITION TO $50.00**

Commonwealth tuition, which heretofore has been $40 a quarter, will be increased to $50 per quarter, beginning in the fall of 1935.

The Commonwealth College Association found it necessary to raise the tuition charge because the increased cost of living makes it impossible for the college to meet its budget with an increased student body. Incomes from tuition have never paid the full cost of maintaining the student body at the college, and the deficit has been supplemented by donations. The enlarging of the size of the student group has increased running expenses, and since donations have not increased proportionately, the added income from a greater tuition charge is necessary in order to operate Commonwealth.

The breakage fee, which has been charged students, will be cancelled when the new tuition goes into effect.

**SHOCK TROOPERS SAVE PEANUTS**

The picture below is Virginia Donaldson's tribute to the fifteen students and teachers who acted as shock-brigadiers and donated their time in order to save eight acres of Spanish peanuts. The farm manager planted the large acreage of peanuts in the hope that good weather would give the farm crew opportunity to take care of this excellent stock feed. But the rains made proper cultivation impossible, and the grass began to choke out the crop.

An appeal was made at dinner for twelve people to hoe peanuts for three hours in addition to their other work. Fifteen students and teachers answered the call. Jack Conroy was among them. This is the first time Conroy ever h Ted peanuts, although he has been a farmer for years.

---

**FOREMOST ARTIST ON SUMMER SCHEDULE**

Joe Jones Will Be Special Lecturer From August 5 to 19

*Joe Jones, one of America's outstanding revolutionary artists, has been added to the schedule of special lecturers for the Commonwealth summer session. Jones will be at the school from August 5 to 19, and will lecture on proletarian art and culture.*

Jones has been teaching art to unemployed workers in St. Louis for several years. It was his students who painted the murals on the walls of the old St. Louis courthouse and fought the efforts of the indignant property owners of St. Louis to demolish them.

Jones' own work was exhibited recently at the A.C.A. gallery in New York City and brought a great deal of comment. Of the canvases exhibited, consisting of murals, landscapes and current scenes, those dealing directly with the class struggle attracted the most attention.

Jones' lectures at Commonwealth on art will supplement Virginia Donaldson's class in Drawing, Composition and Poster Design, which is a regular course, and the lectures given by Pauline Schindler on architecture and modern design.

---

**CONTENTS**

- Writer Goes to Test Law 1
- Foremost Artist Coming 1
- College Increases Fee 1
- Society Notes 2
- Students' Experiences 2

EDITED AND PRINTED AT COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE BY STUDENT-TEACHER LABOR
Students' Experiences

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is one of the series by Commonwealth students on experiences in their lives both typical and significant. It is written around an incident in the exciting history of the militant American farmers, of whom Arthur Skreberg was one. Skreberg was sent to Commonwealth by the Minnesota delegation to the Farmers' Emergency Relief Conference at Stouz Falls, S.D.

Farmers in Action (1932)
by ARTHUR SKREBERG

BUSINESS AS USUAL! So spoke everything about Swift and Company Poultry and Produce Plant at ———— , Minnesota, that cold November day in 1932. Everything from the snout and contemptuous smile on the face of the manager to the orderly waiting lines of cans and crates that surrounded him on the broad concrete delivery porch—even the mere sign on top of the building—expressed: Business as usual.

And why not business as usual? The mere fact that a crazy committee representing a few trouble-makers had asked them to shut down the plant was not sufficient reason. Supposing they had bullied all the rest of the buying stations in that section of the state into doing so! That was all the more reason for staying open. Those farmers needed a lesson anyhow. Yes, it must be—Business as usual.

But something about the way the office girls peered out from behind the office window curtains, as if someone had scared them with bogey-man stories, and something about the way farmers were accumulating on the broad lot approaching the plant, seemed to belie it all.

They were not coming as farmers bent on selling. They brought no cream or eggs, or poultry. Instead, they came in bunches carrying sticks, some agitated, talking eagerly, and others hesitantly—expectantly. The scattered groups swelled and fused into a great crowd as the main contingents of large stock-truck loads of farmers began rolling in from the central converging point outside the city where they had met in a huge pep rally that forenoon. From the way some farmers cut areas through the air with heavy stock canes and vigorously spit tobacco to emphasize their remarks, it was plain they weren't talking crops! They were talking turkey—hot turkey.

There was a brief lull in the crowd, as the still hush before the storm strikes. People began to turn their heads down-streetward as they saw their neighbors crane their necks. Ex-

Society Notes

COMMOWEALTH is just as far away from Broadway and the Chicago Civic Opera as it is from the Greek Theatre and the Opera Comique in Paris. So it seems, anyway, to most of the exponents of labor education in the Ouachitas. The reasons are: first, Commonwealth has only a small Delco, and it isn't sufficient to carry a three tube radio set; therefore a portable victrola is the next best bet. Secondly, we are quite a ways from town, and that is a problem—for Mena has its attractions.

When you get a little tired of boning in the library, or letting the chiggers bite you to bits while pouring through a volume of Das Capital out under a tree, your mind turns to pastimes not listed in the Commonwealth catalog. Conceptions of pastimes may differ, but the results are the same. You want something different, although it wasn't different until you came to the southernmost range.

Or so a quite a crowd here, the individuals of which used to spend most of their evenings while in New York sitting on the stone benches out knew of the tunes of tickets and other insects lull them to bed.

Until the other day our music lovers had nothing to soothe their ears except the tin pan blastings of Sandy's nickel harmonica. Nostalgia crept over them. Oh, but to hear Les Freuludes, or the mellifluous strains of Prince Igor, even on a harmonica.

It took the sixth sense of one of our lovers of the classics to find out that even though Columbia's broadcasting system doesn't reach the college, Columbia's phonograph company did make some profit from us through the sale of a whole series of Brahms, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky phonograph records, which were laying around getting cob-webby.

So this grand find brought together no less than twenty music-hungry souls. They huddled up in a four by five room with their ears trained to the screeching of an old phonograph playing Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 in A Major, and it was a grand evening.

On the other side of the board we have those lovers of the silver screen, and the epicureans. But they too are checked. This time it's distance and the mode of travel standing between them and something different.

No matter how we look at it, Mena is still twelve miles from the college. But those who are rich and willing can cover that distance in the school's rickety
Chivvy truck as long as they pay for its gas and oil and deterioration.

The city of Mena is scattered over something like five or ten square miles — almost as much territory as the 1st sub-borough of Manhattan. The difference is that in Mena can be found three drug stores, one dance hall (open Wednesdays only) one jail, two all night cafes, one movie emporium, and a railroad station.

The railroad tracks in Mena, as in most Southern towns, are important as the city's dividing line. Below the tracks is where the plain folks trade, and there are hundreds of them in Polk County who pride themselves on not having crossed the Mena tracks in twenty years. The above-the-tracks region is considered high-powered. The movie palace is there.

The Commonwealth epicureans usually travel in the company of the film fans, so's expenses can be kept down and more money spent on victuals and sweets. In town he can have his fill of either, or: and: a hot dog and some beer, plain beer, a coke and some salted peanuts, a pint of Southern Special ice cream, a genuine hot tamale, or a fried chicken dinner.

On the other hand, the talkie rooter just hops off the truck and makes for the ticket window. He doesn't even pause to see what is playing. He's anxious to see the "pitcher," and it's been too long since he saw Buck Jones last that nothing will stop him, even if he saw it once before or even if there isn't a comedy showing.

But before the truck makes for home, the movie goers and the epicureans finish off at several of the tables of one of the town's all-night cafes, with beer and doughnuts and ice cream and peanuts and cokes, et al., all around.

College Dormitories Getting New Roofs

"Bring your sense of humor—you'll need it if you draw a leaky roof," said the advance notices on the Commonwealth summer session. And while a sense of humor is still a necessity at Commonwealth, the roof situation has changed.

Ralph Field has already covered the leaky sides of the two boys' dormitories with galvanized iron and repaired the roof of the girls' dormitory. One faculty cottage and the cannery are scheduled for new roofing, and when these jobs are done Ralph believes the roofing situation will be handled for the time being.

The Commonwealth College Association expects to spend a few hundred dollars each year for the next three years putting the roofs of all college buildings in perfect condition.

Commonwealth Courses

Public Speaking

AL LEHMAN, INSTRUCTOR

There are two important instruments of expression with which all Commonwealth students should be equipped before they leave. One, of course, is writing; and the other is public speaking. But before they can consider themselves finished products in either they must have absorbed the theoretical training other courses offer. They must, in other words, have something to say and a purpose in saying it, as well as know how to say it. Public speaking is largely a practice course. The students are taught some speech-making theory, but since the course is so limited by time, the students spend most of their time in preparing their talks and delivering them.

The prime objective of the course is to do away with the beginner's fear of audiences, stage fright, hemming-and-hawing, and the like, and to develop in their place easy mannerisms, effective gestures, good voice and everything else connected with "thinking on one's feet."

The first part of the course is spent in impromptu and extemporaneous three to five minute talks. This is done, not only to help overcome nervousness but also to train and develop the method of timing and of keeping oneself to a given topic. In longer talks, then, the student will know how to give his speech continuity and prevent it from becoming boring.

Symposia and round table discussions are given some time. Emphasis is placed on debates and open air speeches. At this the student has mastered most of the simple principles of public speaking and spends the greater part of his time practicing. He is encouraged to deliver talks and to debate before the whole group and at Society meetings and one-night forums.

Topics for speeches are chosen to interest the class and the individual. Subjects and material dealing with the labor movement, or pertinent to it, are used throughout the course. Students who can handle humor and wit are assigned subjects wherein they can make use of their special talent — for a person cannot be taught or trained to have these extra qualities.

The collective method of class criticism is encouraged. The entire class has the opportunity to criticize the speaker—the content of his talk, his delivery, posture, etc. The instructor summarizes the comments, and may add to them. Collective criticism has a threefold purpose. Not only does it help the speaker to correct his defects, but he learns to take criticism without feeling he is being persecuted. The critic, on the other hand, becomes more conscious of a speaker's undesirable traits and therefore guards against himself falling into the same habits. And finally, the instructor is aided in his observations on how to give him more time to the individual.

Drill in parliamentary procedure makes up part of the course. Here the student is taught how to run meetings, how to be chairman, how to organize and conduct a convention, how to serve on arrangements committees, and how generally to use the rules of order.

This quarter the class is also spending some time studying the concrete speaking problems of a union organizer. It takes up, for example, the "cold" situation, which an organizer faces when he goes into a town or factory which has never had union organization, and where therefore, the important thing is immediate contact.

The methods of individual and group contact will be studied. The class will practice speaking to one person working in a non-union factory, then to five persons, then to ten—always remembering that although the group increases, some of the original contacts are always a part of it. This way the organizer will learn how to weaken his approach by repeating or rehashing and thereby boring some of his hearers—he will learn to be original and interesting.

How to put your contacts to work for you, how to hire meeting halls and arrange for mass and street demonstrations, what to do when your hall is taken away at the very last minute—these and numerous other problems will be taken up.

Since the course is only three months long, the students do not leave it one-hundred percent trained speakers. But they know how to organize a talk, they have confidence in themselves, and they feel prepared to speak before any audience when necessity demands.

WHAT IS COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE?

Commonwealth College is a non-tuition labor school which has as its function the training of young men and women for active service in some militant organization in the labor movement.

Its courses, which include economics, history, labor problems, proletarian culture, creative writing, public speaking, journalism, psychology, etc., are taught from a point of view particular to the working class.

Most of the food consumed at the college is grown on the college farm. The school has its own library, gymnasium, and lecture room.

All work is done communally by members of the school. The school pays no wages. Teachers receive only their maintenance.

Students pay $40 tuition per quarter term (three-months) and receive their board and room in exchange for 26 hours work per week during fall, winter and spring terms, and 10 hours per week during the summer term. Commonwealth is located near Mena, Arkansas, where a branch campus of the University of the Ozarks, the southernmost range of the Ozarks.
[EXPERIENCES FROM PAGE 2]

The well-dressed man was trying hard to explain who he was. Wide-eyed and amazed, he insisted he was a friend of the farmers. Finally he blurted out: "Why are you my state senator?"

And sure enough he was. Farmer-Labor senator and high Farmer-Labor party official. And he had brought the chief of police over! What a friend of the farmer! To become so suddenly available when he had been conspicuous by his absence during the entire forenoon meeting, held only two miles out of this his own home town. He insisted on making a talk, and was permitted. After all, the Holiday boys are all-one-hundred-percent Farmer-Laborites!

He began, "I am heart and soul in your favor, but——"

Shouts of "Come to the point!" "How about shutting up Swifts?" interrupted him repeatedly until he was forced to clamber ignominiously down. One of our leaders mounted the rostrum whatever it was and immediately called for the election from the crowd of a committee to see Swifts. This was done, our demands were promptly complied with, and the day was climaxed with a triumphant march, full street width, down Main street.

The five thousand farmers marched down the street and back again, proud of their recent test of united strength. They felt like singing, but knew no songs to express their spirit. The only one that seemed to pass and that everyone knew was "Hail Hail, the Gang's All Here."

The sickly, drooped smiles on the faces of the merchants as we marched seemed to say that to them this had been a day of—Unusual Business!

[WRITER GOES FROM PAGE 1]

ECTOR Eugene Talmadge of Georgia on the case of Angelo Herndon, and an effort will be made to have the Governor use his influence to bring about the repeal of the law under which Herndon was convicted.

Conroy was preceded on the Commonwealth lecture schedule by Bill Senter, district organizer of the Communist party, and followed by Ward Rodgers, member of the state executive committee of the Socialist party and organizer of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Senter delivered a series of lectures on the Negro problem, and Rodgers is leading discussion groups on the Southern sharecropper.

Accompanying Rodgers for brief visit to the school was J.R. Butler, president of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

RHYTHMIC MOVEMENTS

To Beat of a Drum

The new dance group, which was begun at Commonwealth this summer by Brownie Glowski and is being carried on by Mildred Manson, has proved one of the most important extra-curricular activities of the school. A large number of students whose interest was not primarily in the dance enrolled in the practice sessions for the exercise and technique, so that the Commons every day for several periods has its large circle of individuals in bathing suits doing rhythmic movements to the beat of a drum.

The eight most advanced members of the classes comprise the production group. Their first project is an anti-war cycle to be presented August 1 in conjunction with the Commonwealth Experimental Theater. The dance was created by the entire group.

The August 1 program, which will be given for the Commonwealth and its neighbors, is a part of the national protest against war to be held on that day.

The Commonwealth Experimental Theater will stage one scene from "Waiting for Lefty" and two scenes from "Parade."

BOOKS WE NEED

Danneberg: Karl Marx: The Man and His Work

Walling: Socialism As It Is

Lewis: Rise of the American Proletarian

Hinds: American Communities

Untermann: The World's Revolutions

Richardson: Marx: His Institutions

Marx: Letters to Kugelman

Labor Research Association: Labor Fact Book, I, II

Louis Adamic: The Native's Return

E. L. Bogart: The Economic History of the United States

Wm. J. Burns: The Masked War

John Chamberlain: Farewell to Reform


and Arkansas chairman of the Socialist party. Butler has been a part of the mid-western labor movement for years, and was a member of the old Working Class Union which participated in the Green Corn Rebellion.

Lectures were also given by John Gould Fletcher, one of the best known of American poets. Mr. Fletcher lives at Little Rock, Arkansas.

Former Student Honored

Ray Chaplin, a former student of Commonwealth, was elected third vice chairman of the American Youth Congress. Ray went as a delegate to the Congress from the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. He is a protege of Powers Hannah and comes from the shoe manufacturing district of Massachusetts.

UNITED FRONT CONTINUES

The united front agreement, which has been entered into for the past two quarters by every person on the campus, was renewed again this quarter by unanimous vote.

The agreement is signed by representatives of the Socialist, Communist and unaffiliated groups and the Commonwealth Association. The principal points on the program of united activity deal with work in this section of the country and with building up and increasing the effectiveness of Commonwealth as a labor school.

STUDENT BODY ELECTS OFFICERS

The student elections, held last week for the summer session, put into office two Californians, three New Yorkers, two Pennsylvanians, and two Massachusetts as the only states represented by one office.

Harry Eaton of South Pasadena, California, is president; Ruth Asnis of Kearny, New Jersey, is secretary. The committees are as follows:

Entertainment committee: Judith Knight, David Drucker, Nita Lee.

Forum committee: Allan Fletcher, John Gonzales, Caleb Delson.

Disciplinary committee: Charlotte Braun, Frank Drasler, Morria Shafritz.

The student committees have charge of some of the major functions of the school, the forum and entertainment committees being responsible for the Saturday and Sunday evening activities of the community, and the disciplinary committee of all conduct problems, and enforcement of academic and work standards.

"GREEN CORN REBELLION"

Announcement has been made by Vanguard Press that "Green Corn Rebellion," the first novel by William Cunningham, former Commonwealth instructor, will be off the press August 30th.

"Green Corn Rebellion" is the story of the mid-western farmer buildiing the abortive attempt of several thousand Oklahoman farmers to start a revolution at the beginning of the World War.