NEW TEACHERS FOR COLLEGE FACULTY

John Barnett, Elmer Hamm, John Herrmann, Among Those Scheduled

The Commonwealth adds to its faculty for the fall quarter several of the most experienced and competent teachers in the American labor movement.

John Barnett, who will teach the Marxist courses, has been interested in workers' education for over ten years. He has been on the staff of the New York Workers' School, and has also taught in the Farm School on Wheels. In 1934 he was a member of the staff of the Farmers' National Committee for Action.

He lived for two years in the Soviet Union studying the condition of the industries and the collective farms there. He has had wide experience as a lecturer.

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WINDSOR QUARTERLY TO BE DISCONTINUED

The Commonwealth College Association will discontinue The Windsor Quarterly in its present form after the Fall, 1935, issue. The decision was arrived at in view of the departure of its editors and because of lack of adequate personnel and print-shop facilities.

Many comments have come in regretting this decision, but literary publication at Commonwealth will not end with The Quarterly.

On the contrary, a quarterly literary digest will be added to The Fortnightly to serve as medium to teacher and student expression to reflect more the spirit of the College. Manuscripts will be acceptable from students, teachers, former members of the College, and from writers off the campus interested in publishing such a supplement.

The supplement will cover a broader field than did The Quarterly, inasmuch as it will carry articles to short stories, poetry and book reviews. Fuller details will be given in a later edition of The Fortnightly.

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LUCIEN KOCH IN SEMI-FAREWELL MESSAGE

Lucien Koch, who has been with Commonwealth College for eleven years, the last four as director, has asked the Commonwealth College Association for permission to leave the school. Complying with the utmost reluctance, the Association has nevertheless granted him leave and appointed a new director.

Below is Lucien's statement to his many friends and those of Commonwealth on the eve of his departure:

Commonwealth faces the next school year with the strongest teaching and administrative force ever present on the campus. The faculty is representative of the various groups in the movement. The new Director, Richard Whitten, is ably qualified, and I am sure the friends of Commonwealth will continue their robust support of the school through him.

My wife, Irene Merrill, and I leave, not because our enthusiasm for Commonwealth is less intense but because it is necessary to assume other unpostponable obligations. We discontinue our physical relation with Commonwealth, conscious of the fact that it is now well equipped to go forward.

MURAL IN COMMONS NEARS COMPLETION

The huge mural depicting the lives of the struggling miners and share-croppers of Arkansas, which is being painted on the walls of the Commons by Joe Jones, leading young American artist, is at this time approximately one-third complete. The work is going forward in spite of the fact that only $20 of the $500 materials and labor costs have been contributed to date.

The mural is the first realistic portrayal of the Southern workers' problems to be placed on the walls of a Southern institution. This fact and Joe Jones' reputation as a painter of outstanding ability are bringing many visitors to the college to watch Jones' work.

Mother Ella Reeve Bloor, whose fifty years' leadership of the farmers and workers of America give her authority

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COLLEGE SELCTS NEW DIRECTOR

Richard Whitten Of New Orleans Will Succeed Koch

Richard Whitten, twenty-four-year-old Southerner whose work in the labor and student movement has been well-known for the last three years, will succeed Lucien Koch as director of Commonwealth College, assuming his responsibilities with the opening of the 1935-36 school year which begins September 30.

Whitten is a member of the Socialist Party, served the Student League for Industrial Democracy as National Chairman during 1933, and is at present full-time secretary of the New Orleans local of the Socialist Party.

He is a firm exponent of united front action, and understands both the practical and theoretical aspects of it since

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MOTHER BLOOR GIVEN GREAT OVATION HERE

The most enthusiastic ovation ever afforded anyone at Commonwealth was given Mother Ella Reeve Bloor when she was introduced to the college group at supper on the evening of her arrival. Accompanying Mother Bloor is her husband, Andrew Oeholt, well known in the farm movement, and her granddaughter, Herta Ware.

Giving her impressions of the school, Mother Bloor said, "Commonwealth is a great workers' institution. It will grow. It is needed for the development of organizers and teachers, especially for the farm movement. Its' purpose should be particularly to function as a center for Southern workers' education."

Mother Bloor just finished an extended tour through the middle- and southwest talking to hundreds of workers' and farmers' organizations. After her two weeks' stay at Commonwealth, during which she is lecturing every day, she will continue her tour.

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Commonwealth Courses

Creative Writing
IRENE MERRILL KOCH, INSTRUCTOR

THE CREATIVE WRITING course is conducted as a working project based on the principle that the present cultural development moves toward the path of revolutionary thought. Literary criticism is studied along with actual writing of the novel and the short story.

In order that the student may better understand contemporary writing and criticism, a brief resume is given of literary criteria extending from before Plato, through St. Beuve and Taine, up through Granville Hicks. In criticism, concentration is placed on present-day critics who appear in such reviews in this country as The Saturday Review of Literature, The New York Times. The New Masses. The Partisan Review. By studying the work of living critics, we find, generally, each falling into one of three categories: first, those of the passing generation, who, though rebellious in spirit, are couched in bourgeois philosophy, yet who see the inevitability of social change and so espouse social criticism (e.g., Theodore Dreiser); second, those who began their careers in the spirit of rebellion, but who, for mercenary reasons or recognition of failure, turn to the blind alley of capitalism (e.g., H. L. Mencken); third, those, usually of the present generation, who feel and understand the shifting of social, economic, and cultural values, and so are leading the cultural vanguard (e.g., Granville Hicks).

The nature of proletarian writing is a strong subject in class discussion. Sketchily, we are of the opinion that proletarian writing is that coming from either class (bourgeois or working) identified with the working class and possessive of an underlying philosophy of social revolution. We do not mean narrow dogma or propaganda. We consider that the intelligent mind of today is aware and articulate of the change that is taking place, and since any book whatsoever reflects the contemporary mood, any book written today, if it be important, must be based on the philosophy of social change. We have broken from (if we were ever identified with) the moralistic attitude in writing, that the hero, in the end, joins the Communist party. True characterization-social realism, if you will—we consider the correct approach.

In the light of this criticism, contemporary novelists and short-story writers are read and discussed. The course also includes discussion of anthologies and current magazines.

The greater part of the course, however, is given to the actual writing of the novel and the short story. Not unusually, Commonwealth students are past college age, are holders of academic degrees, are authors of published books and magazine stories; because of this, and because a national literary magazine has been published by the school, writing on the campus is a vital project, close to the cultural pulse.

We welcome the young inexperienced writer; however, and we consider him better material to work with since he does not hold so many of the old prejudices, the old taboos; then it is our purpose to make him articulate to build his self-confidence, to give him the courage necessary for original work.

Each student taking the course is expected to write. Each manuscript is read in class for collective criticism and suggestions for revision. Roughly, criticism includes discussion on (1) structure, (2) approach, (3) method of handling, and (4) significance of material.

In the last year only one novel was published but a number of short stories were published in the current magazines.

Convincing Commonwealth was instantaneous, and before you could whistle across the holler, Joe and Horace Bryan, Commonwealth student and Arkansas miner, were on their way to look over the conditions and to work with the miners. They made a trip, too, through the share-cropping districts and large plantation areas, although Joe was already familiar with this part of Arkansas.

As soon as they got back, Mackey boarded up four windows, and the beaver board was put up, sandpapered and whitened with something special.

WHERE LUCIEN was on his way east in search of a new director for Commonwealth, he thought of stopping off at St. Louis to see some old friends, drink lemonade and cool off. During his cooling interval someone recognized Joe Jones, the artist, wasn't just the man to come down to tell Commonwealth folks all about art, and why hadn't Lucien get him?

That was all Lucien needed to make him tear Jones away from his semi-cool abode in St. Charles, Missouri, and his ten-gallon can of ice-water. The only question Jones asked was: "Will I have to hoe peanuts for my room, board, and laundry service?"

We never did find out what Lucien answered to that, because Jones was already aboard the Flying Crow heading for the wilds of the southernmost ranges and labor education. The heat in St. Louis and environs was literally burning him up, and Joe had heard that the Ozarks a 'e cool.

Joe wasn't here more than five hours, fifty-four minutes and ten seconds before his fingers began itching for a paint brush. And at supper while he was devouring the last bit of bread pudding, he nurtured the idea of a mural that would and could depict the workers' struggle in Arkansas. The place would be the southern alcove of the Commons, and his subjects would be the southern sharecropper and the southern coal miner—and Commonwealth would be the worthy recipient of his artistic abilities.

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WHAT IS COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE?

Commonwealth College is a non-tuition daily 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, and the like, are taught from the point of view partisans to the working class.

Most of the food consumed at the college is grown on the college farm. The school has its own laundry, canner, print shop, etc. All work is done communally by members of the group. The school pays no salaries or wages. Teachers receive only their maintenance.

Students pay $50 tuition per quarter term (three months) and receive their board and room in exchange for 30 hours work per week during fall, winter and spring terms, and 15 hours per week during the summer term, on the college farm, in the garden, office, library, etc.

Commonwealth is located near Memphis, Arkansas in the Ozarkana mountains, the southernmost range of the Ozarks.

Society Notes

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Students' Experiences

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article by Max Schwartz, a Commonwealth student on incidents more or less typical of their lives before coming to Commonwealth, Max Schwartz is from Brooklyn, New York, and has been attending the school since the beginning of the spring quarter.

Demonstration

I walked cockily down Broadway, but I did not feel easy. I had been enthusiastic enough when I was reading about this demonstration that was going to be held in protest against American interference in Cuba, but now that I was actually walking towards it I did not feel enthusiastic at all. I looked at the crowd and the buildings and I remembered how many times I had stood on the curb and watched demonstrators marching by. "Pools," I had thought them, "backing their heads against a stone wall." And now I was going to be one of the fools.

As I crossed the street I noticed a fellow looking around him bewilderedly. He looked like a demonstrator. "I'll bet he's going to the demonstration," I thought, and I felt like asking him. But I didn't. "Sap," I said. "Do you think everyone is going to demonstrate today just because you are?"

I prodded myself along. "If you back out now," I told myself, "I'll mash your head." I reached Wall Street and turned into it. A little way down the street a crowd was gathered and as I thought that must be the demonstration I quickened my pace. In a minute or so I was wedged among the crowd, but it was not the Cuban demonstration. It was a Huey Long meeting. A chap was standing on a box waving his arms and yelling about Huey Long and a couple of boys were walking around selling "The American Progress."

I got out of the crowd and continued to walk down the street. The demonstration was to be held before the National City Bank and as I looked at the numbers on the buildings I realized I still had about a block to go. But I had not walked very far when I heard yells behind me. I turned around and saw police and scarlet banners and lines of dark-skinned people (a long line, I saw afterwards) coming towards me. I heard cries of "Hands off Cuba." This was the demonstration all right.

I saw they were coming after me. I dropped into line. Beside me was a short, dark, thick-necked fellow. I looked at him curiously. His head was tilted upwards and his face was sullen. He was crying "Hands off Cuba," but his cries were slow and even, not like some of the others who were shouting themselves hoarse. Evidently he was an old hand. I noticed he was looking upward I looked up too. The windows of the buildings were filled with people. We had an audience. I looked around. Both sidewalks were packed, the police had their hands full. We passed one and he gave me a shave. "Three in a line," he shouted. "Three in a line." As we were walking four and five abreast some of us dropped back and some went forward.

I dropped back two rows and there I was beside a smiling little girl in a blue jacket and red hat. "Hello, comrade," she said. "Swell isn't it?" I smiled and nodded. I wasn't quite sure yet.

I lit another cigarette and tried to look nonchalant. On the sidewalk a man in a derby hat grinned at me. I waved at him. When we passed a cop who looked bored I waved to him too, but he did not move a muscle.

Suddenly I felt a nudge in my side. I turned my head. The little girl in the blue jacket and the red hat was still smiling. "What's the matter, comrade, have you got a cold?" she asked.

I grew red. "Cold? No? Why?"

"You're not yelling."

"Oh!" I laughed. "I'm saving my voice."

"Go on!"

"No kidding." I laughed again and turned my head away. Confound her. Just like a red. I bet she's a red. If I wanted to yell I'd yell. It was none of her business. Besides, the police were telling everybody to keep quiet.


"Don't be afraid of the cops," she said.

"They won't do anything."

I closed my lips tightly and looked up into her face. I was in her air, but I came down in a moment to steal a look at her. She caught me. "Go on," she urged.

I felt ashamed of myself. I started to open my mouth, but I failed to click inside and again I clamped it tight. She shook her head.


That's it," she cried, "but louder."

I opened my mouth. "Hands off Cuba!"

I yelled. "Hands off Cuba!"

"Swell! Now you've got it."

This was a kick. I looked up at the office windows and laughed. "Hands off Cuba," I yelled at them. "Hands off Cuba," and under my breath - "You 8 -"
Experimental Theater Group Presents Mass Poem-Play

The major item of the Saturday night entertainment for the group in the Commons on August 24 was the mass recitation America, America, written by the poet Alfred Kreymborg. The Commonwealth Experimental Theater Group made an elaborate presentation under the direction of Mildred Manson. Music, dancing, and blackout effects were used to enhance the production.

Included on the same program were five folk-dances given by the dancing class and dancing and refreshments for the Commons.

BOOKS WE NEED

The College has to rely on gifts to fill its new-book needs. The following books are particularly needed in the library at this time:

Nathaniel Pfeffer: Must We Fight Japan?
Harry W. Laidler: Socializing Our Democracy
Anna Louise Strong: I Change Worlds.
John L. Spink: America Faces the Barricades.
Joshua Kunlitz: Dawn Over Samarkand.
Ruth Shalleross and J. Matthews: Partners in Punder.

Associated Little Magazines

The discontinuance of The Windsor Quarterly will leave a definite gap in advanced guard literature. So readers look forward to the appearance of Signatures, 3153 Union Guardian Bldg., Detroit, Mich., which will publish excerpts previewing books by Americans and Britishers. In place of The Grape-Vine Telegram, L. Richardson will issue the more elaborate illustrated quarterly Ugipsa Papers: “We are arranging to pay our contributors a tenth of a cent per word on all nicely written articles and editorials.” 618 Geyer Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Samuel Putnam’s important critique on Norman Macleod, which is to appear in the final [Sept 15] Windsor, has been translated into Spanish. And The Finger Points at the new owner of Story who plans simultaneous publication in three countries.

From 24 West 20 St., NYC, The New Talent and Silhouettes offer prizes for the best 50-word definitions of the term “advance guard.” A free subscription to the Fortnightly will be given for a good answer to the question: What’s doing among Associated Little Magazines, a non-dues-paying organization?

[NEW TEACHERS FROM PAGE 1]

Barnett spent a number of years teaching and doing research work in several of the country’s leading universities and colleges and has earned his degree of Doctor of Philosophy. He is the author of a number of working-class pamphlets, some of which are: “Life Under a Workers’ and Farmers’ Government,” “Speeding Up the Workers,” “Farm Dollar Blight,” “The Deal in Agriculture,” etc.

Two new staff members also expected are John Herrmann and Elmer Hamm, both of whom are experienced working class teachers.

John Herrmann is a member of the Farmers’ National Committee for Action and is active in the labor movement of the middle west. He was a delegate to the Kharrov Writers’ Conference in Russia, and several years ago won first prize in the short novel contest of Scribner’s Magazine.

Elmer Hamm is a graduate of Rhode Island College and spent a year as a student at Brookwood Labor College. He has been holding classes of trade union workers for some time and is present influential among the skilled workers of Paterson, New Jersey.

The complete staff and curriculum for the fall quarter will be announced in the next issue of the Fortnightly.

[WINDSOR FROM PAGE 1]

Fortnightly. The first supplement will appear in December.


The editors, Irene Merrill and Frederick B. Maxham, respectively, will turn to writing, will continue organizational work in the labor movement.

[MURAL FROM PAGE 1]

to speak for them, commenting on the mural, said: ‘Every worker will know what it means. This is the beginning of workers’ art in the South. It is the first picture portraying adequately the struggles of the workers and farmers that I have ever seen. In this mural there is not only struggle and poverty, but hope—and this hope comes from the share-croppers and miners themselves. From their unity, and their realization that they can only be emancipated by helping one another.”

The mural consists of five panels, each one bringing out some outstanding aspect of the struggle for bread among the Southern people. The first panel shows a group of miners in serious discussion, watching their leader as he pours the water out of his dinner pail, the signal for strike. In the two side panels Jones has painted, with the skill and originality of an artist who knows his subject thoroughly, three Negro Lynchings. Coming upon them is the figure of a Negro woman, her fan raised, a frightened child clinging to her dress. A miner from this panel is striding toward them, in determined solidarity with the men about to be murdered.

The other two panels show, through a family in their fly-ridden hovel, a farmer ploughing under his cotton, a dust storm, and emaciated cattle, the conditions of a share-cropper’s existence.

Contributions helping to pay for the mural are being asked for by Commonwealth, since the College itself cannot afford to bear the expense. Only $30 is needed now to complete the work.

[DIRECTOR FROM PAGE 1]

The United Front in New Orleans has been for some time one of the most successful in the United States.

In speaking of his attitude toward assuming the directorship, Whitten said, “I am enthusiastic about the role that Commonwealth can play in the workers’ education movement of the South, which it can serve as effectively as it already does the country as a whole. To build up and maintain a realistic approach to the farm and industrial workers in the South so that they may be developed in large numbers into trained and disciplined trade union and agricultural leaders should be one of the major tasks of the school during the next few years.

To do this the college must be non-factional. I believe whole-heartedly in non-factional education at this stage of the developing labor movement and will do everything in my power to see that Commonwealth remains a non-factional workers’ school.”

Richard Whitten is a native of Indiana who has lived most of his life in Louisiana. He attended Tulane University for four years, where his special interest was social psychology, and since then has been giving most of his time to unemployed, tenant and organizational work.