ADAPTABILITY IS FEATURE OF COURSE

Labor Drama Is Now Full-Time Part Of Curriculum

With the exception of some of those on theoretical subjects, every Commonwealth course tends still further towards adaptation to the needs of the particular students attending. The fall quarter promises to yield training and knowledge more efficiently than ever before.

The policy of flexibility is general in all courses, but has been applied markedly in the writing and speaking courses.

Two writing courses have been combined to make the class in Proletarian Literature and Writing under Myra Page and Stella Mathews. An exhaustive survey of the classics and present-day literature, for the benefit of both writers and non-writers, plus classroom study of writing technique, will page four

SCHOLARSHIPS FROM WARE MEMORIAL

Four Harold Ware Memorial Scholarships for $50 each were allocated to Commonwealth College for the fall quarter by the Harold Ware Scholarship Committee for the Training of Farmer Organizers.

The Committee was set up in New York City through the efforts of "Mother" Ella Reeve Bloor who spent a few weeks at Commonwealth last August. Harold Ware, "Mother" Bloor's son, was known quite intimately at Commonwealth, and it was a great shock to hear of his death during the middle of August, as the result of an automobile accident. No more fitting tribute could be made to the memory of Ware, who spent his life building farmers' organizations both in this country and in the Soviet Union, than the establishment of this fund to train young people to carry on his work.

To fill these scholarships two students were chosen from Texas and two from Arkansas.

WHITTEN TO MAKE LECTURE TOUR

Will Meet College Friends in East and Throughout Mid-West

Richard Barb Whitten, new director of Commonwealth, will leave October 20 on a two-months' trip to the east and mid-west.

The purpose of this trip is to meet Commonwealth's friends throughout the country and more particularly to raise money for scholarships for the many southern students who wish to attend to strengthen their effectiveness in the trade unions and farm organizations in the South, and for the general maintenance of the college. He will also get in touch with young men and women throughout the country who wish to come to the school as students.

Lecture dates are being arranged for him in the various centers, and the subjects upon which he will talk are:
- Commonwealth College—a Southern Labor School;
- Recent Sharecroppers' Struggles; Workers' Education for Southern Labor;
- United Front Against War and Fascism; The Prospects for a Labor Party.

Persons living in the cities he is to visit who wish to arrange for lecture dates or personal interviews should correspond with Charlotte Moskowitz, executive secretary of the school, to be put in touch with the key person in their city. His itinerary is as follows:

- Oct. 20-23—St. Louis.
- Oct. 25-26—Indianapolis.
- Oct. 28-29—Cincinnati.
- Oct. 31-Nov. 4—Washington.
- Nov. 6-9—Baltimore.
- Nov. 10-13—Philadelphia.
- Nov. 14-16—New York City.
- Dec. 2-8—Boston.
- Dec. 8-10—Detroit.
- Dec. 10-12—Chicago.
- Dec. 19-20—Kansas City.

REGIONAL COLLEGES LABOR'S VITAL NEED

Should Work in Close Harmony For Progress And Increased Strength

"I COME to Commonwealth as full of enthusiasm and determination as one should be who is beginning a new task in the labor movement," said Richard Whitten, our new director, when he arrived at the college September 29. His arrival in time for the opening of the quarter was made possible by the death of Huey Long which terminated Whitten's management of Norman Thomas' anti-Long tour of Louisiana planned for October.

Whitten was impressed by the Joe Jones mural and connected its significance with the purposes of Commonwealth College. "It is a powerful portrayal of the lives of the industrial and agricultural workers of Arkansas that grows more upon one the longer one stays here. The task of the college should be not only to educate the backward working people of the South, but also to make southern labor organizations feel

VERY INTERESTING PRELIMINARIES

Among the preliminary lectures and discussions held during the opening week of Commonwealth's fall quarter were the following:


Williams, Paris, Arkansas minister whose dismissal case has been mentioned in the Fortnightly, made a special visit to Commonwealth to deliver his lecture.
Commonwealth Courses

Labor Drama

PETER FRYE, INSTRUCTOR

[NOTE: The descriptions of courses appearing in this series in the Fortnightly are being reprinted in booklet form. Copies of these will be sent, upon request, to those interested.]

Theater-goers and critics on all sides have expressed their amazement at the rapid growth and vital artistic achievements of the workers-theater movement in this country.

There are some 400 theater-groups affiliated with the New Theater League, a united-front central organization that has its main task in building workers' drama groups, giving them aid and artistic guidance through its organ, the New Theater magazine.

The Group Theater, Theater Union and Theater of Action are three of the pro-labor theaters in the East that have achieved major artistic success with so-called "propaganda plays." Already our theater gives promise of an artistic scope and a mass appeal never even dreamed of by the petit-bourgeois escapists or the usual profit-seekers on Broadway.

Another source of joy to us is the knowledge that this growing dynamic theater is only a part of the whole proletarian cultural upsurge which is the red dawn of a renaissance in every form of art in America. We rejoice that our theater is vital because it reflects and leads the struggle of a militant working class that is daily growing more class conscious.

And in the dark face of the bestial Fascist threat we know that our theater will live, will grow in the revolutionary struggle for a new, glorious socialist world.

A formal course in labor drama at Commonwealth must in this sense at least be largely experimental:

1. The students are essentially non-actors.
2. None of them has the signal intention of leaving the college to engage solely in the work of building the workers' theaters.
3. Most students seek only an elementary knowledge of theater-practice as an aid in some other task.

The aim of the course will therefore be to adapt the theory and practice of revolutionary theater to the particular requirements of Commonwealth students without, however, telescoping our artistic principles.

The workers' theater movement in this country has already given mature proof of the powerful agitational weapon that it can be. It is reasonable to believe then, that the principle involved in the training of revolutionary actors and in the production of labor plays, can be of tremendous value to young workers who will leave the college to take up leading work in the building of militant working-class organizations.

The course is a practical one. We begin with a class in "elements of acting" in which certain theoretical principles are laid down. Those theoretical principles are approached, however, through the medium of practical exercises in improvisation. (In these exercises, every student must participate both as actor and critic.) We will in this class attempt to draw out and develop the creative and expressive faculties of each student.

The exercises fall roughly under the following heads:

1. Concentration.
2. Relaxation.
3. Observation and contact.
4. Imagination and invention.
5. Fuller, speedier, and more spontaneous emotional expression.
6. Projection.
7. Analysis and delineation of character.

It will readily be seen that a person who spends time developing these qualities can serve as well in a union meeting hall as he would on the stage.

As soon as we will have laid a basic groundwork and have come to understand and use a common terminology, we enter a second phase of the course.

Students' Experiences

Demonstration in Minneapolis

BY DEXTER GOLSTON

[NOTE: The writer of this account, a member of the Truck Drivers Local 574, is fresh from the scene of the recent struggles in Minneapolis.]

I had heard about it down in Indiana while I was sitting on a stool beside the old bozo, eating breakfast. The announcer had said from the Coco-Cola sign near the coffee urn, "Riot at the Flour City O'mental Iron Works... six killed..." I gulped the coffee in my mouth and grabbed the old bozo's arm and he said, "Say, ya hurtin' my arm, and I felt a little dizzy.

That night we arrived in Chicago and I took the Milwauke out. I took a hotshot and there weren't any empties or refills so I had to ride the top all night and I lay on the bucking running board in the cold cinderly wind thinking of Jules and Bill and Si and Max lying dead, in state, up at headquarters. I didn't sleep much and when I got to Minneapolis I was so tired I could hardly roll a cigarette.

I walked right up to headquarters, dirty as I was, and found Comrade Hanek just looking up. I asked him how many of us had been killed and he told me none, only Bill wounded. I felt very weak then and I wanted to go home and go to sleep but Hanek told me that since the town was so wrought up over the murders of two nights before, it had been decided to hold a united front unemployment demonstration in protest so that the indignation would turn in the right direction. So he and I walked up the street to the vacant lot behind the municipal auditorium and found the comrades and about 1000 men from the three organizations in the united front gathered around the speakers platform in the shadow of the huge brick wall of the auditorium. We arrived just as the last of the speakers finished and in a few minutes we started forming a four abreast line.

The vanguard carried an American flag and behind it we marched down Grant to Nicollet and as the line turned the corner someone took up "Solidarity Forever" and it swelled for its fore lines, then broke into laughter and cat-calling at the bystanders. Faces poked out of the windows of the office buildings. Their smiles were small. They seemed puzzled... three killed and forty wounded two days before... someone threw an orange peel.

We marched down Nicollet, through the heart of town and then turned
down Ninth Street to the courthouse. As we approached it the cat-calling and laughter in our ranks became less and the shouts to the crowd which lined the way more serious and meaningful. A few stragglers dropped out and the ranks closed in like sheep in the cold.

We turned the corner and went up the hill to the front of the big brownstone courthouse. There was a bulge in the line as it eddied out and back to go around the four double-parked armored cars. As we passed them we looked in. There were two officers in each one, one of them driving, the other with a teargas gun across his knees. The yellow bullet-proof glass made it gloomy inside and there were racked guns. In front of the courthouse the police force stood massed. The policemen’s jaws were red and many of them had paunches. Each one swung in front of him a small baseball bat. As we passed them there was no sound in our ranks and they watched us.

"Crush ya head like an eggshell... bastards..." someone said.

Down the hill on the other side we went, across and back up again. The line was much shorter. As we got to the top this second time, Sam Davis jumped up on the stone parapet which runs down the side of the building and called to the men to break the line and bunch around him. The struggling line compressed and the men looked few and knew that they were few. There was an uneasy chattering. A lieutenant marched a squad of police to surround us. Sam started haranguing. A tall fellow next to me surreptitiously took off his U.C. button.

"They’re scared," whispered Max. "Shouldn’t have broken here... supposed to do the talkin’ down by the postoffice... lucky if no one’s killed!”

"Murderers!" said Sam and swung his arm toward the police. They swung their clubs and looked at each other and smiled.

Three killed and forty wounded. . . .

The men were silent. The police came in a little closer. A lieutenant walked toward the armored cars. The policemen drifted away to the side of us away from them. "Traitorous reformers!" said Sam, and the men were silent. The tall man beside me had disappeared. "We’re gonna get it sure," said Bill, "an’ there’s no damn need." A little man elbowed his way through the crowd and Sam bent down to talk to him. We waited a moment. A few stragglers dropped out and away from the fringe of the crowd. Sam stood up. "Fellow workers," he said, "The tools of the capitalists picked up Olie Brenner last night and are holding him without charge at this very moment. Let us stay here and raise our voices in protest until they release him!"

There were a few small voices of approval from the men. The police leered. The lieutenant got out of the door of the armored car. He stood on the running board and surveyed the crowd for a moment. Then he put a hand to his mouth and shouted, "Hey, you guys, ya time is up, start leaving!" and before fully back he was fully back. But it started up, shot by the crowd and emptied tear gas shells into us. A fat man beside me fell screaming to the ground. The shell rolled into the gutter and spat and reared up. The three members of the library staff, who had been talking about rearranging the furniture in the workroom, suddenly decided about three o’clock one afternoon that they would clean the place up. Within an hour all the furniture, files and books had been moved out of the catalogue room, and the next three days were occupied with building new shelves and and storage cabinets, staining and painting the walls, ceiling and furniture. Installing long-needed electric lights (the library workroom is in another building some distance from the library building), and rearranging files and supplies. The library proper received less attention, but some new shelving was erected, some of the furniture repaired, and other long-standing odd jobs completed. The virulence of the cleaning bug this year is attested by the fact that when two amateur carpenters invaded the library and started to work, a Mr. Day who was then visiting the college for a week-end and who happened to be in the reading room, came out, presented his card in the carpenters’ union and insisted on joining the crew.

Connoisseurs of the "southern drawl" are heartened again. When Mildred Price, teacher, departed from Commonwealth, the song of the washer, "southern drawl" and "new" superimposed, and punctuating verbal paragraphs, was lost in a vast dialectical silence. And when she drowned she drawled—at about twice the ordinary rate of speech. And the students coherence they always got more out of Myra’s lectures. But now we have Myra Page.

Besides a drawl, Myra has a baby, a most remarkable baby. The campus is continually a-murmur with ohs and ahs, because the baby seems to be equipped so completely with big brown eyes, a nose, mouth, and the cutest little hands and feet. Some of the accessories, Myra informs the world without sounding an "r", come as separate equipment to be enjoyed by the mother, mostly.

Although she is a southerner, her accent is modified by a Way-Down-East flavor, with distinct touches of Russia and Minnesota. That is why she can say "abate" and "about" in one utterance, and create an echo that suggests a rolling of "rrr".

To sum up, Myra Page is conceded the fall quarter championship in setting old words to new music, even though she does admit with a laugh that she sometimes forgets foreign names. In the debate of the decaying arts, the art of pricking up ears is one that has, yet a hope of preservation!
WARD RODGERS TALKS ON COTTON STRIKE

The organization and gains of the cotton pickers strike in eastern Arkansas was the subject of a talk here on October 5 by Ward Rodgers, an organizer of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Rodgers stopped at Commonwealth on his way to California to begin work as state secretary of the Socialist Party there.

Complete solidarity of black, white and mixed union locals won for pickers of seven counties a doubling of the average pay rate, and completely forestalled attempts to use terror against the workers.

Labor Drama (from page two)
Here we demand that the student work as a director or as a teacher in a program of play production. The gains here are manifold.

1. In the process of producing a play, we get a fuller opportunity to crystallize and test in practical application the theoretical principles already gained in the class in acting.

2. At this point the work in the class becomes very closely identified with the procedure of the rehearsal. As we approach in the class the problem, e.g., of character analysis, we build our improvisations around characters from the current production. In the same way we develop the relationships in the play, the mood of the play, by improvising situations suggested or implied but not apparent in the script.

After a while we abandon completely the differentiation between class and production. Since the methods used in the class are completely absorbed into the rehearsal procedure, the division is a mechanical one of time only. The course then assumes the form of a production program, pursued with special emphasis on the question of method.

3. The student thus gains a methodological approach to planning and realizing a complete production; such knowledge is invaluable in building mass organizations.

The productions will be shown here in the commons and later as often as possible in the surrounding towns. The student is thus thrown into contact with broad audiences, and experiences the thrill of creating and living in that aesthetic bond—that sympathy—between acting and audience which is the reward of true art.

The programs of this drama group ("flying squadron") will not be limited to plays, but will include stirring labor songs and short vaudeville skits.

I am left with a point which is most important to mention. A concomitant result of the course is the gain of an elementary understanding of play construction. We analyze the relationships in the play to find the social or economic compulsions that motivate each character. And we enrich and augment our conception and interpretation of the drama by improvising alternative situations. Often, in such improvisations, where so many intellects and different temperaments are thrown together in a situation of conflict, the collective creativeness of the actors engaged in this dynamic process reaches emotional climaxes and suggests development that gives the play new meaning and power.

In this way, by a method of trial and error, the construction of the play is tested.

If a student has a particular interest in writing, his observations here, supplemented by a good test on the subject, will give him a working basis for his endeavors.

I want to say as a final touch in rounding out this outline that if there is an incompetent playwright hiding either in my class or on the campus, we will find him, nurture him, and lovingly guide him. So that the great American play may yet be written at Commonwealth College.

Regional Colleges (from page one)

that this school belongs to them and is for their use.

There are too few labor colleges in this country. More of them should be established to serve particular regions, and those existing should work in closer harmony for progress and strength. The inspiring contrast between the social-minded students here and other collegians who have not been so concerned with personal gain is a great impetus for the creation of schools to train young workers and farmers for militant service in the labor movement.

The policy of Commonwealth College for the coming year is realistic and clear. We will bend every effort and expend every resource to strengthen the relationship of the college with the farmers' organizations and the trade unions of the South. In order to do this we are strengthening our courses both in farm and trade union organization.

"Commonwealth College approaches the new task set for itself with a sense of great responsibility and a keen desire to learn the problems of the farmers and workers of the South. On the other hand we want the farmers and workers to feel that this college is theirs to utilize. It is our intention to draw more students from southern states, preferably through scholarships set up by workingclass organizations.

"It is imperative, both for the college and its increased usefulness to the labor movement, that it remain steadfastly non-factional. Further than this, the college points with pride to the pioneering work it has done with respect to the united front, which has successfully existed for the past three quarters of the campus. The necessity for this escapes no one who is really concerned with workingclass victory. Proletarian unity alone does not guarantee victory, but without it victory is impossible."

Adaptability is Feature (from page one)
be supplemented by individual criticism of the particular output of each student.

The course in public speaking will cover every type of presentation. The class will be conducted mainly by Richard Whitten and Raymond Koch. At one period its study of delivery will coincide with some of the class work of the Labor Drama group. Peter Frye and Stella Mathews will assist in the study of prepared speeches.

The farm course is being conducted by Arthur Skreberg.

Labor Drama under Peter Frye is now a full-time part of the curriculum, with regular class periods, an advance from its former status as an evening and spare-time activity.

The other classes now being conducted are: Labor Orientation, entire faculty directed by John Barnett; Marxism I: Elements of Political Economy, John Barnett; Imperialism and Fascism, and Fact Finding Methods, Henry Black; Problems and Strategy of Trade Unions, Raymond Koch; History of the American Labor Movement, and Journalism, Marvin Sanford; Organization and Strategy of the Farmers' Movement, and History of the Farmers' Movement, Arthur Skreberg, Typing, Charlotte Moskowitz.

Demonstration in Minneapolis (from page three)

fumes. Another car raced by and shot twice. The air became stinging and my eyes started to run. The policemen near us retreated from the gas. It edded around us. The men stood like sheep. "Common," said Max in a choked voice and bent to take the fat man's shoulder. I took his other arm and we dragged him across the street. Someone volunteered to take him to the hospital and we piled him into the car. Then we walked down on to headquarters.

"Don't rub ya eyes," said Max, "but blow ya nose like hell!"