Unemployed Organization Discussed by Bill Reich

Discussions on Organization of the Unemployed which were held at Commonwealth the week of August 10th were led by Bill Reich of Allentown, Pennsylvania, one of the leaders of the unemployed movement of that state.

Reich came to Commonwealth directly from the important siege by the unemployed in Pennsylvania of the state capitol at Harrisburg. He played the role of Prosecuting Attorney at the mock trial conducted by the unemployed in the senate chambers, at which the reactionary senators were convicted of mass murder for their refusal to provide adequate relief. 10,000 people took part in the march, with at least 3,000 at Harrisburg all the time. The Democratic Party in Pennsylvania supported the hunger march at first because it made good political propaganda against the reactionary Republicans in the state.

The unemployed, however, in one of their mock sessions, according to Reich, voted to oust both the Democratic and Republican congressmen and elect the Farmer-Labor Party to the state legislature. A piece of the rope used by the unemployed to slide down into the senate chambers has been sent by the state committee of the Workers Alliance to the Museum of Social Change at Commonwealth.

Bill Reich was formerly a high school teacher and taught psychology and a training course in workers' education at Commonwealth in 1932 and 1933. He had been active in the Pioneer Youth organization and established the Pioneer Youth camp in the mining region of West Virginia. In 1933 he organized Unemployed Leagues in Ohio, but was eventually forced to leave the state because of his activities there. In 1934 he went to Pennsylvania where he continued to work among the unemployed. He is at present director of workers' education under the WPA in Lehigh County.

Reich is candidate for state assemblyman on the Farmer-Labor ticket, which is being supported by the important trade unions and is endorsed by the Central Trades and Labor Council. He is also treasurer of the Allentown local of the American Federation of Teachers.

Several New Teachers Added to Faculty for Fall Quarter, Opening on Sept. 28th

Final Notice

This is the last issue of the Fortnightly before the Southern Workers' Anti-War Summer School opens on August 31st. Members of trade unions or farm organizations in the South are reminded that they should send applications immediately to Charlotte Moskowitz, Executive Secretary, Commonwealth College, Menlo Park, Calif. This is absolutely the last notice.

Several scholarships are still available for the Anti-War School and no one who is eligible for this special course should fail to make application. The course is so arranged that it may be completed in two weeks by those who are unable to attend for the regular three weeks. Come to the Southern Workers' Anti-War Summer School and learn from experienced teachers how you can help to stop war and fascism.

C. Johnson Has Had Wide Experience With Farmers

Clyde Johnson, in his four years of service in the labor movement, has had such varied experiences as to acquaint him with many aspects of organizational work. He began in the National Student League in New York in 1932 and is at present secretary-treasurer of the Share-Croppers Union.

Clyde was district organizer for the NSL during the summer of 1933 and came South as national field organizer the same year. It was through his leadership of the Berry School strike in Georgia, where he was arrested two times, that he gained contact and established a basis for organizing the farmers in northern Georgia. In December of 1933 he worked with the unemployed in Atlanta. After he was driven out of Atlanta, he went to Bessemer, Alabama, the center of the steel industry in the South.

Haven and Clara Perkins, W. Chappell, J. Karstein Join Commonwealth Staff

This fall quarter which opens at Commonwealth on September 28th will offer a practical and theoretical course, with new courses and new teachers to meet the most vital needs of present day labor education.

Recognizing the importance of organizational work among the unemployed today, Commonwealth has introduced a new course in the Organization of the Unemployed, to be taught by Haven Perkins. Perkins has received national recognition for his able leadership of the militant Federal Union No. 20, 192, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, at the Fort Peck Dam in Montana. He had previously gained experience through active participation in the Workers Unemployed League in New York City. Perkins has a brilliant scholastic record as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford and as instructor at Harvard and General Theological Seminary and combines the best qualities of a teacher and practical organizer.

The course which he is to teach at Commonwealth will include an analysis of the economic causes of unemployment and the potential fascist use of the unorganized unemployed. He will give special attention to conditions in the South and will present a careful study of the tactics of organization and the problems of carrying out a program of action, based on first-hand experience and wide knowledge of the unemployed movement.

Clara Mae Perkins, who has been active with her husband in organizing the unemployed, will teach Workers' English during the fall quarter at Commonwealth. Mrs. Perkins was born in Virginia and studied at New York University.

Winifred Chappell, associated with the Methodist Federation for Social Service, will return to Commonwealth where she has taught previously to conduct a course in Current Events. The aim of this course is to inform students about the world, its people, and its problems, and to develop a sense of responsibility for the world's problems.
Chinese Students’ Role Is Described

By We-Kot Liu

Just as the Red Army in China plays an important role in the class struggle in the world, so the Chinese student movement is not only important in its own country but a vital force against capitalism, imperialism and fascism in the world. The student movement in China, however, has its peculiar economic and historical background which it is necessary to understand in order to grasp its significance and to predict its future.

Education in China is not compulsory and eighty per cent of the Chinese people are illiterate. Almost all the students belong to the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois class. They are individualistic and materialistic. In school, in college, they are taught to love mankind and to be good. They go to school in order to get a higher position in society, to better their standard of living and at the same time to serve their country. As the representatives of the middle and working classes, the students in China form a class which is high above the common laborers. They look down upon manual work and they look down upon the older Chinese culture. They wish to westernize the Chinese civilization and to make China an advanced nation.

However, since the world depression, since the government spends more and more for munitions and less and less for education, communication and other constructive work, since every year there are hundreds of thousands of students graduating from the schools, these ambitious youths who are coming out from the ivory tower of ideas and ideals are at once lost. They feel that what they learned in school cannot be utilized in their professions, that graduation is unemployment and that the country and society they were taught to love and serve does not need them.

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the Shanghai War in 1932 warned the students of the national crisis and aroused their patriotic sentiment. They organized together to urge the Central Government to arm the people and defend its country, but their meek petitions were answered by the suppression of the government. They were humiliated by the imperialistic invasion and dismayed by the failure of the student movement of 1931-32 which was only an isolated movement and lacked a definite political background. The majority of students did not see at that time the basic reasons for imperialism and unemployment and did not understand the youth’s way out. They were restless and dissatisfied, but were also vague and confused.

However, at the end of 1935, when Japan set up the puppet government, the “Hope National Autonomus Council,” the students once again awoke from their slumber and roused the students throughout China into a nation-wide movement. From December of 1932 until May of 1936, the newspapers and magazines contained news almost every week about the Chinese student movement, describing its heroic struggle against imperialism and the reactionary suppression of the government. Hundreds of them were arrested and beaten by the policemen. The National Student Association and its branch organizations were declared illegal and their rights of free assembly and free speech denied. Every means of terrorism was used against them.

The student movement quieted down, but more students became radical. From these struggles they learned many valuable lessons:

1. In general, the composition of the students in the high schools and colleges is: 80 per cent neutral, one to two per cent communist and eight per cent communist sympathizers, one per cent Blue Shirt and nine per cent Blue Shirt sympathizers. In order to win the support of the majority to fight against the Blue Shirts, the leaders should avoid too radical slogans and lead the movement instead of isolating themselves from it.

2. The students should win the support of the intellectuals and bourgeois sympathizers.

New Catalogues Out

Significant developments are taking place in the American labor movement and during the next few months we shall probably witness changes of far reaching importance. Do you want to learn more about the background and forces behind these changes? Do you want to train yourself for more alert and decisive activity in your labor organization?

Then write for the 1936-37 Commonwealth College Catalogue, which has just been run off of the press. This catalogue includes a description of the purpose and life of Commonwealth and the courses offered for students, workers and farmers. Study the history of the labor movement, trade union problems, farmers’ organizations, political economy, public speaking or labor journalism at the full quarter of Commonwealth which opens September 28th. Send inquiries immediately to Edith Moskowitz, Executive Secretary, Commonwealth College, Mena, Arkansas.

Mother Ella R. Bloor Gives Talk in Mena

During her two weeks stay at Commonwealth, Mother Bloor’s beloved personality and fiery working class message stirred not only the students gathered here for the summer session, but reached out to hundreds of workers and farmers in this section.

On Friday, July 24th, three hundred people of Mena took advantage of hearing Mother at her best, a symbol of fire, determination and devotion to her class. More than that, they proved by action what they think and feel about this great labor leader when they foiled those reactionary forces which had organized a provocative attack to break up Mother’s meeting.

When Mother arrived in town she discovered that men with guns occupied the grandstand from which she was scheduled to speak. A band was eagerly tuning its instruments. The husky fellows wore cheap grins on their faces, they were sure that this seventy-four year old woman would be unable to compete with them. A democratic nominee for governor was supposed to speak from the grandstand where the workers had previously secured permission for their meeting.

At 7:30 sharp the meeting began. The moment Mother Bloor raised her voice, the band broke in. Mother Bloor called to the people who wished to listen to her to follow her to another corner of the park. People shouted from the crowd, “Friends, take your benches along. Show them who you want to listen to!” Men, women and children picked up their benches and carried them down to a quiet corner of the park, following Mother, because it was her message they wanted to hear.

Inspired by the understanding and sympathy of the people and vexed with the brazen attempt of the reactionaries to prevent her from speaking, Mother delivered a masterly speech, explaining the forces which are driving toward war and fascism calling upon the people for unity in their struggle. She said that a united front of workers and farmers was the first determined step which must be taken to end our present status of shameless exploitation. For an hour and a half she spoke, convincing her listeners that the only way out lies in the strength of unity, the unity of all workers and farmers.

The following evening, Mother Bloor delivered a rousing speech to more than two hundred farmers who assembled at the college. On Monday, July 27th, she spoke again at Alder Springs for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union local there. The many questions which were asked of her were indicative of the eager desire of Arkansas farmers to learn more of how they may better their conditions. And without a doubt they were whetted and more determined for having heard Mother Ella Reeve Bloor.
Book Notes

The college library will occasionally list some of the more important new books received.


A Russian literary critic interprets Shakespeare’s work against the background of a vigorous and growing English capitalism.


An outspoken, but unconvincing argument for fascism as the only solution for America’s economic and social ills. Important because it is about the only reasoned defense of fascism available in English.


A rapid review of the activities of Soviet scientific organizations in the fields of physics, chemistry, biology, and engineering. Somewhat technical, but the layman will gain from it an idea of the scope and variety of research in the Soviet Union.


An account of recent advances in military technique, emphasizing poison gas and airplanes, and a forecast of the probable character of the next war and its effect on civilian populations.

Farmer-Labor Discussion Is Led by Mother Bloor

The Farmer-Labor Party is our best immediate defense against war and fascism,” declared Mother Bloor in the discussion of the Farmer-Labor Party held during the fifth week of Commonwealth’s summer session.

Mother Bloor explained, “We can’t have a strong Farmer-Labor Party without the farmers.” She called attention to the elimination of organizers in the early attempts to build a Farmer-Labor Party to confine most of their work to industrial laborers, deploring this policy as overlooking one of the most militant forces the labor movement has, the aroused farmer.

Mother Bloor pointed out that in the building of a Farmer-Labor Party such experiences as the swallowing of the Non-Partisan League of the Dakota’s by the Democratic Party must be guarded against.

This league, after accomplishing much in farm relief legislation was hoodwinked and drawn into the Democratic Party because of the lack of political organization.

Southern Anti-War School To Be Opened August 31

L A H O R is always the major sufferer in every war. This is true of victor and vanquished alike.” Quoting from a resolution passed at the fifty-fifth annual convention of the A. F. of L., the announcement of the Southern Workers’ Anti-War Summer School to be held at Commonwealth, August 31st through September 19th, has been sent as a challenge to southern labor organizations.

Thirty scholarships are available for this three weeks course for a member of a trade union, farm union or unemployed organization. The schedule calls for four hours class work every morning. Lectures will occasionally be given in the afternoon, to be devoted to industrial work, public speaking and other labor activities. Every student must agree to work ten hours at one of the community tasks. Afternoons not devoted to industrial work can be spent in studying, drawing, reading or sports.

A course on the Economic Causes of War and its Effect on Labor will be taught by Richard B. Whitten, director of Commonwealth. This course will make a study of the underlying economic forces which breed war, with special emphasis on the effects of the system on workers, including a survey of the industrial structure of the South and its usage in the last war. Considerable attention will be devoted to imperialism, nationalism and fascism, showing how these forces developed and the part they play in causing war.

Southern Labor and War will be taught by Carl Brannin of Dallas, Texas, and will include a survey of the labor movement in the South today with the purpose of showing where it needs to be strengthened and what its allies are and the part it must play in stopping war. Louise Stevens Jessen of New Orleans will present a course entitled A Peace Program of Action for Southern Workers. This will constitute a practical study of what workers have done and can do to prevent war and guarantee world peace, methods of how to educate and organize southern workers for struggle against war and the system that makes war.

There will be several supplementary lectures by prominent leaders in the peace and labor movements. The 5,000 volumes of the library of Commonwealth College will be available for the use of all students attending the Anti-War School and a special reserve of books dealing with war and labor has been arranged.

This special school, sponsored by the Labor Division of the Emergency Peacetime Campaign, offers to a limited number of serious and mature southern workers an unparalleled opportunity of three weeks intensive training for intelligent and effective anti-war activity in the labor movement. Applications should be made to Miss Charlotte Mokrovitz, Executive Secretary, Commonwealth College, Memphis, Arkansas.
[CHINESE STUDENTS from p. 2] Thiers as well as the workers and peasants. A united front should be formed.

3. The majority of students began to realize that their enemies are not only the imperialists but also the existing government which suppresses the laboring class as well as the middle class, to be the rod of the imperialists.

4. In order to get wide support among the peasants and workers and to make them realize the inter-relation between imperialism and their poverty, the students should go to the country districts and the factories to give speeches and organize these people.

So in the spring of 1936, the students went into the country to carry on their propaganda. They were chased back by policemen and mobs, but they won the sympathy of the peasants and learned many practical lessons. They learned that they must use the peasants' language, to find conciliating leaders among the peasants and not leave the masses behind.

After five years of despair, silence and slander, knowing not which way they should go, the students in China once again raised their voices against imperialism and fascism. In and by their real struggle, they saw the necessity of war against imperialism for permanent peace and of overthrowing the present system and government to build a new society. However, the majority still see only the national crisis and not the class struggle. They are ready to fight against Japan, but are in doubt as to whether they should change the social system and oppose the present government.

Just as the May 30th student movement was the signal of the revolution of 1925, so the student movement in 1935 will play an important role in the next revolution in China. But its future depends on whether these five radicals can win the majority over to their side, whether the movement itself can be part of the broader class struggle and whether it can be transformed from a nationalistic movement to a revolutionary one.

[FALL QUARTER from p. 1] is to analyze current events in relation to the basic forces in contemporary society. Particular attention will be given to the development of modern imperialism.

Jules Karstein, organizer for the Friends of the Soviet Union in the Philadelphia district, will also be added to the regular faculty for the fall quarter. Karstein led the discussion groups on the Soviet Union and the Youth Movement during the summer session. He will instruct the courses in Advanced Political Economy and in Public Speaking. Karstein offered a special public speaking course during his stay at Commonwealth this summer which proved to be extremely popular and beneficial.

The elementary course in Political Econ-