Sharecroppers' Union
Greets Commonwealth

Second National Convention of
Southern Tenant Farmers' Union
Endorses Labor Party

A resolution expressing the appreciation of the sharecroppers for the scholarships awarded them by Commonwealth College was unanimously adopted by delegates to the second convention of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union last week at Little Rock.

National sentiment for independent political action was further strengthened as these cotton workers, representing 25,000 from six states, without a dissenting vote, went on record in favor of a farmer-labor party -- "when steps are taken by organized labor to form such a party." The resolution declared that "power in the old political parties is vested in the business men of the country, in the plantation owners, in the bankers and the class in America whose role is to produce, but to appropriate wealth.

Resentment against land tenancy was evident at every one of the seven sessions held over a three-day period. The plantation system was condemned time and again in the general meetings and group conferences. The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union declared itself in favor of a proposed homestead act which would "abolish all forms of agricultural tenancy." The bill, drawn up and endorsed in principle by the Union, provides for creation of a National Agricultural Authority which would have the power to purchase farm lands. From this land farms would then be leased at low rentals to landless farmers or genuine cooperative farming associations. Around this program the convention raised the slogan: "Land for the landless." A conference to discuss and support such a bill will be called in Washington next month by H. L. Mitchell, secretary of the Union.

WASHINGTON the nation's capital, Around the monuments and landmarks, raising the flag, the bill, provides for creation of a National Tenancy Authority which would have the power to purchase land and sell it at low rentals to landless farmers or genuine cooperative farming associations. Around this program the convention raised the slogan: "Land for the landless." A conference to discuss and support such a bill will be called in Washington next month by H. L. Mitchell, secretary of the Union.

MOTHER BLOOR FETED ON 45TH ANNIVERSARY

SYMPOSIUM WILL HONOR JOE JONES

Outstanding Artists to Speak at Joint Affair to Aid Art Gallery and Commonwealth

A symposium on "The Social Basis of Art," organized under the auspices of the A. C. A. Art Gallery and the New York Committee for Commonwealth College, will welcome Joe Jones and honor him as one of the outstanding muralists of this country. Last summer Joe Jones painted a mural for Commonwealth using as subjects the sharecroppers and miners of the state.

Roger Baldwin, director of the American Civil Liberties Union, will be chairman of the symposium. Outstanding artists will participate in the program which includes talks by Joe Jones, J. Klein, art critic of The New York Post and Joseph Freeman, a "chalk" talk by William Gropper and a dance and talk by Tamiris. The sponsors are expecting a large gathering.

Admission is one dollar. The proceeds will be divided and go to support the A. C. A. Art Gallery and Commonwealth College. The symposium will take place on February 2, 8:15 p.m. at the New School for Social Research, 66 W. 12th Street, New York City.

Joe Jones is a self-taught student from the middle west, St. Louis. He has chosen as his field of expression to portray the lives of working classpeople whom he knows so well, being himself a worker -- Joe Jones' father was a house painter. During the month in which he painted the mural for Commonwealth College last summer Jones remarked one day, "I know now what I want to do -- cover America with murals!"

As a demonstration of the fact that Art is not removed from the life of the people, representatives of Art and Education have cooperated to organize the symposium. Further information can

Was Popular Summer Lecturer At Commonwealth -- Helped Raise Scholarships

A TREMENDOUS banquet to celebrate Mother Ella Reeve Bloor's 45 years of devoted service to the labor movement is being organized by her many friends to take place on January 24, at 7:30 p.m. at the Hotel Lismore, Broadway and 73rd Street, New York City.

Mother Bloor was a visiting lecturer at Commonwealth during the summer term of 1905 and during the entire stay was the center of a mob of students who feasted continuously from her rich experience in the labor and farmer movements. After leaving Commonwealth Mother Bloor organized a Hal Ware Memorial Committee to raise scholarships for Commonwealth, to train young workers in the farmers' movement. Seven scholarships have already been raised.

The Mother Ella Reeve Bloor 45th Anniversary Committee has opened offices at 100 5th Avenue, Room 1069, where reservations may be made for the dinner. The chairman of the sponsoring committee is Agnes Burns Wick. She reported that on December 15th fifteen unions had already promised delegations and support to the dinner. Norman Thomas, who had been invited to speak, had the following to say:

"Of course you can count on me as a sponsor to a dinner for Mother Bloor. Unfortunately, I shall be speaking in the West on January 24th or I should be present. It goes without saying that Mother Bloor is a Socialist and that there are differences between us, but I don't think there ever was a time when I would not be glad to respond to a chance to say what I think of Mother Bloor's courage, undying youth and passionate devotion to the cause of the workers. It's magnificent."

Mother Bloor's father, Charles Reeve,
Students Hear School's History

Commonwealth is More Realistic and Practical Today, Koch Says

RAYMOND KOCH, veteran Commoner, told the story of the early days of the school and outstanding events in its history to the new student body at an opening talk for the winter term. "Commonwealth," he said, has grown from a progressive school for workers, which characterized its beginning, into a labor school vitally concerned with contemporary labor struggles.

Koch explained that the change in educational stress reflected the changing economic and social conditions in the country. When the school was founded in 1923 in the first years of the post-war period, there was a general uncertainty about the aims and direction, the new tactics of the labor movement. Commonwealth's education lacked precise purpose — was liberal and indefinite. After the bank crash of 1931 and 1932 Commonwealth's education became more purposeful, its course more practical, its training more realistic. Closer contacts were built up with the labor movement.

Koch related how the early pioneers of the school constructed Commonwealth on the site of a log cabin farm. Unfinished buildings were lived in and worked on simultaneously and classes were held without inter upton. Primitive living gradually gave way to greater and greater comfort, earned by the hard labor of students and teachers.

During the past four years Commonwealth has given its support to importunate organizaions of the workers, Koch said. In 1932 a delegation from the school went to bring relief to miners in Harlan County, Kentucky, and to investigate their conditions. The school furnished organizers to go to Covington, Mississippi to aid in a southern organizational drive of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union. A group of students investigated the condition of terrorism existing in the mine area of southern Illinois and helped to publicize this condition. The school has supported the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union in its struggles against landlord terror and oppression.

Commonwealth has cooperated and worked with the Arkansas Federation of Labor. Its teachers are all members of the American Federation of Teachers. Student dramatic groups have presented labor plays before worker and farmer audiences. Students and teachers have supported and assisted farmers, unemployed and youth organizations in the vicinity of the school and in the state.

Koch pointed out that, of the hundreds of students who have attended Commonwealth, scores have taken leading positions in the trade union and farmer movements. Some are active in youth organizations, some in the movement against war, others on the cultural front in the field of writing and drama, or in the field of labor journalism. Practically all are, in some way or another, helping to build a progressive labor movement.

In closing his review of Commonwealth history, Koch referred to the Arkansas legislative investigation of the school during February of 1935, and also to the introduction at the time of repressive bills aimed against the school and against the labor movement of the state. He told of the splendid, country-wide defense movement which supported Commonwealth against the attack, and which resulted in the defeat of reaction.

C. C. IS LABOR MOVEMENT OUTPOST

Financial Drive Not Concluded — Whitten Says

THAT Commonwealth is holding an outpost for the labor movement of the country is definitely understood by the young people, university groups, trade unions, and progressives of the North and East. This assurance was given Commonwealth teachers and students by Richard B. Whitten, director, when he returned New Year's day after a 9,000 mile trip to gain support and to raise funds for the school.

Whitten emphasized that the financial drive for the year had not been concluded and that funds were still badly needed to maintain the security of the school in its 1936 program. He reported a great interest everywhere in the work of Commonwealth — especially an interest in Commonwealth's relation to the growing struggles of the sharecropper and working farmer.

In answer to the question — why are people interested in Commonwealth? Whitten answered: "The labor movement and the people of the United States generally are facing new problems and new issues. Their faith in the New Deal has been shaken. There is a general endeavor to get out of the rut we have all been in during the last decade. There is an interest in Commonwealth because it is doing something to get society out of a rut."

Of the great number of people visited the vicinity of the school and in the state.
ciety education and propaganda can be separated. Without illusion is being faced the fact that the Class Struggle is a struggle against control education—a battle for the minds and hearts of the boys and girls of today who are tomorrow to say whether our country shall be an Industrial Democracy—whether we shall stand free in the Commonwealth and in Free Workshops, or be the debased pawns and tenants of an oligarchy of militarists whose only God is Gold, whose only religion is the insane worship of the Almighty Dollar.

Against such a fate the Commonwealth has now set its face. Here on the frontier of the first conquered province of the American Capitalist Empire, the stricken Land of Dixie, the teachers and students of Commonwealth are carrying on to the end that Labor shall yet be free in a classless world.

It is a heartening sight for one who, like myself, has seen so many fights made and so many battles lost, to see the young men and women here, whether they be Socialists, Communists, trade unionists or Industrial Unionists, or otherwise, at last dropping their warring with each other over creeds and dogmas and facing the facts with a fine determination to use men with women on free soil making for a New World Order—to find a way out of Chaos—to march together on to the final victory, crying, "Workers of America and the World, unite!"

That is the spirit of Commonwealth, and that indeed is cheering. It is all that has encouraged me to keep on these last few hard and bitter years—this coming forward of the young men and women to fill up the depleted ranks of the Old Guard of Rebels and to carry on their work of emancipation for the liberty of Man, Woman and Child.

Not only here at Commonwealth, but all along the line from Texas thru Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama and Tennessee I have met these brave and alive young folks coming forward in ever-increasing numbers, more and more every day in joining in the struggle to make our forefathers, and their work of emancipation for the liberty of Man, Woman and Child.

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FORTY-SIX ENROLL FOR WINTER QUARTER

Many Unions And Farm Organizations Are Represented

FORTY-SIX students representing thirteen tradeunions, farm associations and unemployed groups form the student body for the winter quarter which began two weeks ago. Sixteen of the students are Southerners and they have enrolled as a result of Commonwealth's new orientation toward Southern labor. Several of these Dixie workers are recipients of the Harold White memorial scholarships which were raised by Mother Bloor, one of Commonwealth's staunchest friends.

Among the Southerners who are preparing themselves for service in Labor organizations are four members of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin mill worker, a Florida citrus worker, a Carolina hosiery worker who has had experience in the sweat shops, a leader of the unemployed in terrorism-ridden Alabama, a Kentucky miner, a Georgia electrical worker and several university students.

Fifteen of the students come from the factories and fields of the midwest and another fifteen hail from the East and the rural areas of New England. Each quarter for the past year, the proportion from the South has been steadily increasing while that from the East has been gradually diminishing.

Among the labor organizations in which the current group of Commoners have been active are unions of citrus workers, office workers, pattern makers, the building trades, teachers, journalists, electricians, textile workers, miners, relief workers, and farmers.

IMPRESSIONS

And so, as these rebellious boys and girls have cheered me; and as one who knows the South and all her people mean to the saving or destruction of freedom and as a citizen who knows that you who can will all that lies in your power to keep Commonwealth College functioning to not let this light be extinguished before it penetrates the surrounding gloom. Do this, back up these Vanguards of boys and girls now gathering in Dixie and I am sure that then no “White Armies” will be marshaled from our borders on our fellow workers elsewhere, all the beatings of the “Great Ghouls” of Wall Street to the contrary.

SHARECROPPERS from page 1

Rallying around the theme, “To the disinherited belongs the future”, the Union planned a program for action for the coming year. High on the list of achievements of the convention was the creation of legal defense committees in each of the more than 200 local. The national defense committee of the Union is headed by Howard Kester, militant Tennessee minister who has been active in the Union since its creation. These committees will be aided by the Labor and Socialist Defense Committee of the Socialist Party.

The officers of the union commented on the tremendous growth of the S. T. F. U. has experienced in the past year. At its first convention delegates representing 2,500 plants were in attendance, while at this latest meeting it was announced that 25,000 cotton workers were represented. The tenfold growth of the Union has been marked by terror and evictions. Union organizers and lawyers have been driven out of counties while union cropppers have been evicted by the scores and thrown in jail. Still the Union has advanced constantly and, supported by the American Federation of Labor and friends of labor, it has grown until it is one of the most potent forces in southern agriculture. More has been written about the S. T. F. U. during 1935 than about any other union.

A message of solidarity was brought to the delegates by Tom Burke, who spoke for 12,000 members of the Sharecroppers Union in Alabama and bordering states. He called for closer cooperation between the two cotton workers organizations. John Barnett, chairman of the Commonwealth College faculty, brought greetings from the College and also from the Farmers National Committee for Action. He was elected chairman of the Friday evening session of the convention.

Discriminatory practices against Negro schools were severely condemned by the union. A resolution pointed out that “no people can progress in the darkness of ignorance...education is denied to the great masses of people. It is the solemn duty of the State to provide proper educational facilities for all the people.” The Union called for an educational system “for all the people,” and for the passage of laws by the legislatures of the southern states providing for free textbooks, decent school houses, adequate transportation and free meals for all school children.

Donald Henderson Visits

DONALD Henderson, secretary of the Committee to Organize Agricultural and Rural Workers, now studying the conditions of agricultural workers in the South and Southwest, visited Commonwealth recently. He had attended the Sharecroppers convention at Little Rock, Arkansas and stopped on his way to Oklahoma. Henderson talked to the Commonwealth group on the special problem of organizing agricultural, rural and small town workers, whom he termed the “worst exploited” workers in the country.

by Whitten on his tour, all agreed with Commonwealth's new policy of making its main contribution to the South. All of them hailed Whitten's report on the victory of the recent cottonpickers' strike led by the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

The people of the North are enthusiastic about the new forces that are developing in the South to swell the general labor movement and which will result in a higher standard of wages for the country as a whole, Whitten reported.

asked about conditions in the country, Whitten singled out the development of the industrial union movement within the American Federation of Labor as the most significant thing that is happening. “The process may be painful to some members of the A. F. of L,” he said, “but the pains are ‘growing’ pains. There is a growing movement for unity.”

MOTHER BLOOR from page 1

was an enlisted soldier in the Civil War, in the Seventh New York Regiment. His family had come to America in the early 1600's. Mother Bloor is 73 years old. She entered the labor movement as a suffragist, and after the war, the Communist Party. The women and children in strike struggles know her for her courage and kindness. At present she is helping the poverty stricken farmers and sharecroppers and is in the front lines among those who are fighting against war and fascism.

JOE JONES from page 1

be obtained by communicating with Lilian Fine, New York Committee for Commonwealth College, 23 E. 8th Street, or A. C. A. Art Gallery, 52 W. 8th Street, New York City.

Joe Jones has promised to return to Commonwealth in the summer of 1936, painting another mural depicting the life of the Arkansas timber workers.