The Bankhead Bill
BY ARTHUR SHERBURG

In the next four years the Farmers Home Act, as proposed by Senator John Bankhead of Alabama and Congressman Marvin Jones of Texas, will almost certainly become a topic for discussion in every southern farm household. There are very strong possibilities of such a bill becoming law. Roosevelt has said since his re-election that he favors it or some bill of a similar nature.

Even without such endorsement the bill passed the United States Senate in 1935. It has since then been much hailed by the southern press. The Futrell Tenancy Commission has also done its bit towards building up its prestige. According to the November number of the American Cotton Grower, it was finally agreed that (1) there is a problem to be solved, (2) it will take time and not just a few days or weeks, and (3) something like the Bankhead-Jones Bill seems to be the best suggestion to meet the problem on a state and national scale.

The bill is passed as a solution to the tenancy problem. Its title, The Farmers Home

College Institutes Scholarship Drive to Aid Southern Workers and Farmers

Commonwealth College is instituting a special drive for scholarships to enable the school to aid southern workers and farmers who cannot pay their own way.

There are many deserving young people who want to come to Commonwealth to train themselves for work in the labor movement but due to economic difficulties they are unable to do so. All friends of the school are asked to help supply the scholarships which are needed.

An example of a southern worker who should have a scholarship is the case of Orien Worley. Worley is a young Oklahoma farmer with a wife and three children. Due to three years of drought and crop failure the creditors foreclosed on his little farm. He was not defeated. With other farmers Worley carried on a struggle for relief. He is active in the Farmers Union and the Veterans of Industry (organization of unemployed). He realized his need for a deeper understanding of economics and methods of organization. Orien succeeded in getting the money for one term of study at Commonwealth. He wants to stay longer but hasn't the money. Commonwealth is making every effort to get a scholarship for Orien Worley. The school wants to help him become an effective leader in his community.

The case of Orien Worley is an example. Commonwealth knows dozens of such persons who need the training the school can give. Friends of Commonwealth are urged to contribute to the school's scholarship fund. Unions and other organizations can help to advance the southern labor movement and thus strengthen the entire labor movement by contributing to the Commonwealth scholarship fund. Individuals are urged to organize house parties to raise a scholarship. Fifty dollars will keep a student at Commonwealth for a quarter term of twelve weeks.

All contributions should be sent to Charlotte Moskowitz, Secretary-Treasurer, and marked "Scholarship Fund."

Einstein Aids College; Unions Send Donations

Professor Albert Einstein, the great scientist and supporter of world peace, continuing his endorsement of Commonwealth's contribution to the labor movement, recently sent a donation to the school. Last year Einstein aided the school by furnishing a scholarship. When the school was under legislative attack in 1935 he protested against the attack, branding it as an attack upon academic freedom.

Locals of two international unions have lent their support to Commonwealth in its work of training southern organizers. The school has received donations from Local Big 4 of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and from Branch 16 of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers.

"The College has also received a donation from the Joint Board of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.
An Open Letter to the Young Workers and Farmers of America

We are the depression generation. We are twenty million young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four. Five million of us are totally unemployed. The professions are closed to us. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, chemists are on the relief rolls or trying desperately to make a go of things somehow. The factories, mines and mills are closed to us. Millions of adult workers, our fathers and brothers, are without work.

We are of age in the midst of the most severe and prolonged crisis in the history of this country. Our families are breaking up. We are in the C.C.C. camps under supervision of the military. We should be learning how to build, how to create; not how to kill, how to destroy.

We are willing and eager to learn and to work. There is no place for us. Politicians mouth pleasant sounding but meaningless promises. We must learn the reasons for these things. We must equip ourselves to face the problems that stare us in the face. How can we do this?

There are, unfortunately, only a few labor colleges in this country. It means self-sacrifice and great effort to establish a workers' and farmers' school. The quick-to-promise politicians won't help. The workers have to do it themselves.

Deep in the heart of the South, in Mena, Arkansas, there is such a school. It is called Commonwealth College. It has been here for many years in spite of great difficulties. From it have gone young workers and farmers to take their place in the labor movement; in the struggle for better living conditions. They have been good and valuable fighters because of their training here.

It was from some of these Commonwealth graduates that I, a young Texas worker, learned about this college. Seeing the way they worked; admiring their clear-headed approach to difficult problems; seeing how clearly they could explain the difficult and complex problems confronting both them and myself, I determined to come here and take advantage of this opportunity to make myself a conscious and clear-headed fighter for progress and against the tragic conditions existing all around me.

I found other young workers and farmers here. Here was a cross section of American youth. From all parts of the country they came: students, unemployed, farmers, miners, factory workers, former C.C.C. boys. All part of the depression generation. All determined to do something about it.

We study hard. We learn from political economy why there is unemployment; why there is starvation in the midst of plenty. We learn what to do about it. We study problems of the unemployed and what to do about it. We study trade union problems and organization; we study farm problems and organization, public-speaking, English, labor journalism and other subjects.

Our instructors don't face us with a stern face and a rule. They are our friends, our buddies: people who have played and are playing a leading role in the workers and farmers struggles in this country. The atmosphere in the class room is friendly and intimate. We learn a lot.

We have at our disposal the best labor library in the country: 8,000 volumes. We have magazines, newspapers, pamphlets. It costs us $50.00 to come here for three months. In return for this money and a few hours daily work at community tasks, we get schooling, room, board, and laundry.

We have classes every morning but Sunday. We work in the afternoons. We play volley ball, tennis, ping pong, horses and other games before it gets too dark. We have forums, entertainment put on by the students themselves; we visit our neighbors; go to the square dances or arrange them here at the Commons and invite the neighbors.

Commonwealth is First Labor College to Offer Course in Unemployed Organization

The first course in organization of the unemployed to be given in an American college, according to the Working Alliance, has been started at Commonwealth.

The instructor, Haren Ferkenko, believes in getting clearing personnel before setting down to practical questions of grievance committees and demands. Some time was devoted to discussion of the question: what is our reason for organizing a labor group of any kind, be it trade union or unemployed organization?

Thus the note first struck was that the unemployed are a part of the labor movement. The question next arose "which part—what is the place of the unemployed in the movement?" Concrete illustrations were given on these points, mostly from the instructor's latest experience at Fort Peck Dam, Montana, where he was leader of the Workers Alliance, and also organizer for Federal Labor Union 1992, A.F. of L.

Methods to defeat reactionary and fascist forces attempting to make the unemployed were discussed. Unless there is a united labor movement to lead them, large numbers of the unemployed will be directed into reactionary channels. The concrete work of organizing locals of the workers Alliance is aided immensely by the presence of aggressive unions in the community. Experience shows that the unions are more likely to win their demands if the unemployed are organized.

The instructor devoted time to show the important role of the unemployed in the Toledo and the San Francisco strikes. He gave examples of the growing concern about unemployment within the A. F. of L. unions. Among all unions the membership is opposed to dropping unemployed members and demands exemption in dues payments.

More and more the whole labor movement will unite on the unemployment question as a principal issue. Unemployment is the outstanding fact of our present system. The demands now made by the Workers Alliance will rally the whole labor movement to their support.

"Prepare a speech to a union or trades and labor council urging support of the Workers Alliance," was the assignment made at a recent class meeting. Now that the class has some perspective it is settling down to the practical problems of leaflets and mass meetings. A great deal of emphasis will be placed on trying to look at every problem from the point of view of the average worker. "The only way to write a leaflet or make a speech is to circulate around and find out what grievances the
The United Front Committee of Commonwealth College has launched a vital program of activity for the fall term. The activity of this committee is symbolic of the school’s position in the labor movement. Commonwealth works for the unity of all progressive organizations.

In the interest of such unity the committee formulated a broad farmer-worker program which was adopted by the student body.

The committee has organized protests against violation of civil liberties and the right of workers to organize. The most recent action was to protest the refusal of President Roosevelt and Administrator Harry Hopkins to see delegates of the Workers Alliance. The arrest of David Hopkins to see delegates of the Mena Workers Alliance. The arrest of David Hall, a Commonwealth student and organizer, for refusal to the Mena Workers Alliance. Suppression of protest meetings.

In the interest of such unity the committee has been assigned to give every possible assistance to the Mena Workers Alliance. Support was given to the program of the Commonwealth local of the American Federation of Teachers, represented by delegates Haven Perkins and Ray Koch to the Arkansas State Federation of Labor Convention.

The committee works to establish helpful and friendly relations with the neighbors of the college. So far one public dance has been held with great success. A special program to which neighbors were invited was arranged for November 7th, anniversary of the founding of a workers’ and farmers’ government in Russia. Programs are being planned for Armistice Day and Thanksgiving Day.

Through such a broad united front program, through the work done and the work being planned, the committee members and students of the school are being trained for future activity in the labor movement.

[UNEMPLOYED from page two] workers are talking about.”

The class is quite informal. Points are made freely by students, and the instructor often gets half his lecture covered by others with just a few additions or interpretations of his own.

WHAT IS COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE?

Commonwealth College is a non-factional 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 pertinent to the working class.

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

Students pay $50 tuition per quarter term three months and receive their board and a room in the dormitory. They work 12 hours work per week during fall, winter and spring terms and 15 hours during the summer term, on the college farm, on the college farm, in the garden, office, library, etc.

Commonwealth is located near Mena, Arkansas in the Ouachita Mountains, the southernmost range of the Ozarks.

Teachers Represented at State Labor Convention

With more than 100 delegates present, representing 4000 organized workers in the state, the Arkansas State Federation of Labor met in convention in Little Rock October 26th to 28th.

It was a remarkably progressive convention. The convention endorsed the Southern Tenant Farmers Union; called for the reinstatement of the C.I.O. unions and requested they be seated at the Tampa convention of the A.F. of L; endorsed a comprehensive and progressive program for the teachers of the state, and took a clear and firm stand in support of civil liberties and labor rights. Opposition to the poll tax and a program of workers' compensation were reaffirmed.

Speaking for endorsement of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, fraternal delegate J. R. Butler, president of that organization, pointed to the steady growth of the union, described its struggles in the two years of its existence and told of its effectiveness in combating the evils of the sharecropping system. The resolution to endorse the S.T.F. U, which was introduced by delegates of the United Mine Workers of America and the Arkansas State Federation of Teachers, met with the immediate approval of the delegates.


The convention did not take a clear stand on the present civil war in Spain. This was due, no doubt, to the fact that it is not an issue of the Democratic Party. Resolutions to endorse the Workers Alliance and for the building of a Farmer-Labor party were defeated.

Haven Perkins and Ray Koch, delegates from teachers local 191 of Commonwealth College, reported great sympathy among many of the delegates for the work of the school. Several delegates accepted invitations to visit the college in the near future.

At the closing session delegates all pledged to make strenuous efforts to affiliate all unions in the state with the Arkansas State Federation of Labor. Every local union was asked to be responsible for bringing an additional local into the Federation.

Old Blind Aleck

BY JOHNW. THOMSON
Don’t nobody see nobody
Walkin’ aroun’ dis field.
Ain’ no cotton growin’ in de middle
An’ de corn ain’ makin’ no meal.
De ol’ houn’ dog done lay down and died
De possum ain’ scared no mo’!
De mule in de pasture ain’ chewin’ on
de haystack
His legs dyed done gotten too po’.
Oh, ‘Liza where is yo’ all?
Ah just can’t hearken you somehow.
Come feed de chickens and lead me to
de gate, Hon,
Ah gotta feed and water de cow.
Don’t nobody see nobody
Walkin’ aroun’ dis field.
Ain’ no cotton growin’ in de middle
An’ de corn ain’ makin’ no meal.
De hain’ no pasture, deh hain’ no possum,
De haystack done rotted away.
Mah fahn is taken, de mule forsaken
Cause I don’ have de money to pay.
Oh, ‘Liza where is yo’ all?
Ah just can’t remember somehow.
De heavens dy blue, and de good Lawd
done took you,
‘Liza Ah’m comin’ to you now.
Don’t nobody see nobody
Walkin’ aroun’ dis field.
Ain’ no cotton growin’ in de middle
An’ de corn ain’ makin’ no meal.

CAMPUS NOTES
Weather Report: The first killing frost visited Commonwealth on the night of November 3th. Results: Six students ordered additional blankets from Sears Roebuck; Farm Manager ordered one hog butchered; wood crew fell to with new determination; mechanic drained all radiators on all ears; nature lovers appraisingly watched a galaxy of color appearing on the Ozark slopes.

PRINTED AT COMMONWEALTH BY THE COMMONWEALTH LABOR
Published twice a month at Mena, Arkansas, by Commonwealth College. Subscription one dollar a year. Entered as second class matter January 30, 1926, at the post office at Mena, Arkansas, under the act of August 24, 1912.

November 15, 1936 Commonwealth College Fortnightly Page Three

Old Blind Aleck

BY JOHNWIN. THOMSON
Don’t nobody see nobody
Walkin’ aroun’ dis field.
Ain’ no cotton growin’ in de middle
An’ de corn ain’ makin’ no meal.
De ol’ houn’ dog done lay down and died
De possum ain’ scared no mo’!
De mule in de pasture ain’ chewin’ on
de haystack
His legs dyed done gotten too po’.
Oh, ‘Liza where is yo’ all?
Ah just can’t hearken you somehow.
Come feed de chickens and lead me to
de gate, Hon,
Ah gotta feed and water de cow.
Don’t nobody see nobody
Walkin’ aroun’ dis field.
Ain’ no cotton growin’ in de middle
An’ de corn ain’ makin’ no meal.
De hain’ no pasture, deh hain’ no possum,
De haystack done rotted away.
Mah fahn is taken, de mule forsaken
Cause I don’ have de money to pay.
Oh, ‘Liza where is yo’ all?
Ah just can’t remember somehow.
De heavens dy blue, and de good Lawd
done took you,
‘Liza Ah’m comin’ to you now.
Don’t nobody see nobody
Walkin’ aroun’ dis field.
Ain’ no cotton growin’ in de middle
An’ de corn ain’ makin’ no meal.

CAMPUS NOTES
Weather Report: The first killing frost visited Commonwealth on the night of November 3th. Results: Six students ordered additional blankets from Sears Roebuck; Farm Manager ordered one hog butchered; wood crew fell to with new determination; mechanic drained all radiators on all ears; nature lovers appraisingly watched a galaxy of color appearing on the Ozark slopes.

WHAT IS COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE?

Commonwealth College is a non-factional 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 pertinent to the working class.

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

Students pay $50 tuition per quarter term three months and receive their board and a room in the dormitory. They work 12 hours work per week during fall, winter and spring terms and 15 hours during the summer term, on the college farm, in the garden, office, library, etc.

Commonwealth is located near Mena, Arkansas in the Ouachita Mountains, the southernmost range of the Ozarks.

Teachers Represented at State Labor Convention

With more than 100 delegates present, representing 4000 organized workers in the state, the Arkansas State Federation of Labor met in convention in Little Rock October 26th to 28th.

It was a remarkably progressive convention. The convention endorsed the Southern Tenant Farmers Union; called for the reinstatement of the C.I.O. unions and requested they be seated at the Tampa convention of the A.F. of L; endorsed a comprehensive and progressive program for the teachers of the state, and took a clear and firm stand in support of civil liberties and labor rights. Opposition to the poll tax and a program of workers' compensation were reaffirmed.

Speaking for endorsement of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, fraternal delegate J. R. Butler, president of that organization, pointed to the steady growth of the union, described its struggles in the two years of its existence and told of its effectiveness in combating the evils of the sharecropping system. The resolution to endorse the S.T.F. U, which was introduced by delegates of the United Mine Workers of America and the Arkansas State Federation of Teachers, met with the immediate approval of the delegates.


The convention did not take a clear stand on the present civil war in Spain. This was due, no doubt, to the fact that it is not an issue of the Democratic Party. Resolutions to endorse the Workers Alliance and for the building of a Farmer-Labor party were defeated.

Haven Perkins and Ray Koch, delegates from teachers local 191 of Commonwealth College, reported great sympathy among many of the delegates for the work of the school. Several delegates accepted invitations to visit the college in the near future.

At the closing session delegates all pledged to make strenuous efforts to affiliate all unions in the state with the Arkansas State Federation of Labor. Every local union was asked to be responsible for bringing an additional local into the Federation.
Commonwealth Celebrates Russian Workers' Victory

The 19th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution was celebrated at Commonwealth by a large group of neighbors and students on November 7th with a series of speeches and an evening of entertainment and dancing.

Following an impromptu Indian file parade around the Campus by the students, the day opened with three talks on the achievements of the Russian Revolution and its significance to the workers of the world. Andy Overgaard, Trade Union Problems teacher, made the main speech of the morning, discussing the "Political Lessons of the Russian Revolution," in which he gave a survey of the tremendous successes of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in developing from a backward country to an industrial nation. He pointed out the improvements in the conditions of its workers and farmers in the abolition of unemployment and drew a contrast between these conditions existing in the Soviet Union and the unemployment in capitalist countries.

Oren Worley of Oklahoma spoke on the "Collective Farms in the Soviet Union," and Sam Epstein of Pennsylvania followed with a talk on the "Life of the Youth in the Soviet Union."

The evening's festivities in the slogan-decorated Commons were preceded by a talk on "Economic Freedom" given by Haven Perkins, teacher in Unemployed Organization. Two students, Lillian Cohen and Dave Schreiber, presented a skit, "America," followed by a reception.

Square and round dancing furnished the entertainment for the rest of the evening. Coffee and cake were served as refreshments. As an added attraction there were two contests, one for the best set of square dancers and one for the round dancers.

Those friends of the school that arrived early in the afternoon were invited to the evening meal in the Commons.

The Lane orchestra furnished the music.

AUTO WORKER PRAISES COMMONWEALTH WORK

Merlin D. Bishop, educational director of the United Automobile Workers of America, when invited to send students to Commonwealth College, voiced his appreciation of the work the school has been doing and stated his intention of placing the school's invitation before southern local unions of the auto workers.

He writes in part: "I do want you to know that I have followed Commonwealth's activities for several years and do appreciate the fine work you have been doing, and you can count on my support as far as it goes."

[BANKHEAD BILL from page one]

Act, and the publicity given it leaves the impression that it will enable every tenant farmer to become an independent homeowner. What are the intentions and possibilities of the bill? Will it help the oppressed and exploited tenants and croppers, or merely capitalize on their fervent desire for land? Let us see.

Reading the preamble we find that it is "an act to create the Farmers Home Corporation, to promote more secure occupancy of farms and farm homes, to correct the economic insecurity for instance, strikes of sharecroppers in eastern Arkansas resulting from some present forms of tenancy, to engage in rural rehabilitation (which might read "subsistence farming") and for other purposes."

It is written in general statements about security and homes, but offers nothing like the uncompromising statement for home ownership that one would surely expect in a bill so highly touted.

But let us give the benefit of any doubt. Perhaps the authors were just too modest to make the preamble read as strongly as the content would have justified. Let us then examine the contents. How much money will it cost to furnish the tenants? How soon will they get it? What will they have to pay in interest? That is what counts!

It provides that bonds not to exceed one billion dollars may be sold for carrying out the purpose of the act—but, "within three years after the approval of this act not more than three hundred million dollars of said money may be issued," and further, "none of said bonds shall be issued within one year after the approval of this act. We shall see later exactly how much this will help the American tenants. But first let us observe that it calls for the expenditure of sixty million dollars out of relief appropriations, which shall be turned over to the appointed committee of five to use as they shall see fit—with more promised from time to time.

Now, assuming that the bill becomes a law February 1, 1937, and that the Farmers Home Corporation of five put the bill into effect as soon as possible under its provisions, let us see how far it will go towards solving the tenancy problem facing the country.

The total value of the farms held by the 2,865,155 tenants on January 1, 1935, was $10,952,747,497 which would make the average tenant farm worth $3,823, and the bill promises average-sized farms. Therefore, instead of the billion maximum that the bill provides for, almost eleven times that amount will be necessary to buy each tenant an average sized farm, and remember, tenant farms are smaller by 37.2 acres than the average for all farms. It would then fall short, at the best, a cool ten billion dollars of buying all tenants average homes.

In addition it falls short approximately another twelve billion dollars if it were to make "secure" also the farm homes that are now burdened with mortgages. In all, then, it would miss by twenty-one billion dollars furnishing the twenty to thirty million tenants necessary for assuring "more secure occupancy of farm homes."

In cold figures, the very best the bill could have been expected to do: (1) buy an average home for less than one out of ten tenants; (2) buy an average farm for less than one out of thirty tenants; (3) help absolutely none till 1938; (4) help at a rate from one to three per cent, not a high rate of interest is possible—three and one half percent plus another one percent for corporation expenses. Furthermore, we have no assurance that a single one of the 2,865,155 tenants will be helped even by 1950. There is not one word in the bill that would make it obligatory upon the corporation to ever start work!

The conclusion should be obvious. The bill should be opposed, not because it is a "Home Ownership Bill," but because it is not a Home Ownership Bill! The struggle for land and secure homes is the greatest problem facing the farmers. To pledge oneself to assist in this task is the finest thing one can do. But the Bankhead Bill is not a step in that direction.

An entirely new measure is required. Either that, or the Bankhead Bill must be thoroughly amended and revised to make it justify the support of the people.

Socialized Medicine

O K 15 years ago, Dr. M. Shadid, director and founder of the Farmers Union Community Hospital, Elk City, Oklahoma, wrote, "The doctor's time is all taken up trying to make a living out of people's poverty. ... when the profession is socialized the doctor will be concerned with preventing disease."

His hospital is one of the best in the country. Clean, airy, and warm. Food prepared by an expert dietician. Thes staff competent, kindly, and helpful. Friday and Saturday are devoted to taking care of all who cannot pay. Such an institution should be a solution to the problem of providing the poor and the unemployed with proper hospitalization. But it has been subjected to a persistent and malicious attack. Selfish politicians and unscrupulous medical men harass this noble institution. Only last week Dr. Shadid had to appear in court to explain why his license should not be revoked.

The Farmers Union, the Oklahoma State Federation of Labor and others who are acquainted with the splendid work of the hospital at Elk City will resist these attempts to the utmost.

We would like to urge the readers of the Fortnightly to write to Dr. Shadid in Elk City encouraging him in his work and supporting him in his valiant fight for socialized medicine.