STUDENT GIVES RADIO TALK

Elmer Brashear, former Student Body President, delivered the following eight minute radio address to the Public Speaking Class as a practice assignment.

New that the excitement of the national political campaign is over, and the strongest forces of reaction in America defeated, let us turn our attention to the problem that now faces us, the immediate pressure problem of the education and organization of the working class.

A complete analysis of this problem cannot be made in the short time at my disposal, but we have a labor school here at Mena, Arkansas — a school, by, and for the workers — and I wish to tell you something about this school.

Commonwealth College, located twelve miles from Mena, in the foothills of southwestern Arkansas, is the only labor school in the South and for the thirteen years of its existence has trained scores of workers from all over the United States for effective work in the labor movement. It opens its winter term on December 28th.

The school is unique in many ways. It is, as I have said, owned and controlled by the workers. This is true in that all the work here is done by student and teacher labor. There is a fifty dollar charge for a three months term. This payment covers tuition, board, room, and laundry. Since it is obviously impossible to maintain an adult for three months on fifty dollars a student is required to contribute twenty hours work each week toward the maintenance and upkeep of the school; laundry, wood crew, carpenter shop, farm.

Workers are trained for a definite field in the labor movement, therefore the courses of study offered are all practical ones — the results of years of constant improvement brought about by the school authorities in consultation with active workers in the field.

The basic course are: Political Economy, dealing with basic problems of a sick society and what should be done to make it well; Trade Union Problems and Organization, given by an instructor who has himself had years of experience organizing the workers and helping them fight battles; Problems of the Organization of the Unemployed, dealing with the solution of practical problems.

Then there is the ever popular Labor Orientation course, which is a key or index to all the courses. An interesting History of the Labor Movement in America will be continued. Realizing the need of trained and informed workers in the field of farm organization, the college is arranged for a practical and intensive course covering the many problems of the farmer, with special reference to the South. Special emphasis is being placed on the immediate demands of the southern farmer such as marketing, wage increases for day laborers, the right to spin their own cotton, and payment of drought relief.

A course in mimeographing technique is given which is designed to enable the student to more efficiently and quickly prepare the thousands of leaflets and form letters that are constantly being sent out and are so necessary in educational and publicity campaigns. As a part of this course the class this quarter will publish two issues of a four page campus paper. Courses in Typing and Public Speaking are also given, and a special course in Labor Writing which includes reporting and other forms of journalistic writing.

I hope I have given you some idea of what Commonwealth College is like in the few minutes that I have talked to you. I realize that I have omitted many things, many sidelights on the life here — our swimming and volley ball in summer, football, baseball, and basketball in the fall and winter. I haven’t touched very much on sports, Saturday night dramas, dancing. With all our seriousness of purpose, we have a great deal of fun. We are a jolly bunch who play as hard as we work. This seriousness of purpose does not rob us of the joy of living.

It is less than a month until the beginning of the winter term which opens December 28th. You are urged to get in touch with us at once if you think a school such as ours will help you to solve your problems. If you are a farmer, day laborer, mechanic, small landowner — a worker of any kind — and are beginning to realize that there is something wrong with our social system, we invite you to Commonwealth College.
Printshop Works Under Difficulties

Working "under difficulties" is nothing new to the labor movement, and Commonwealth, being a labor college, is no exception. The printshop crew realizes this quite well. In fact, the motto of the printshop, if it had a motto, would be "All the News Must Fit the Print."

This applies especially to headline writing. The headlines are often written to conform to the type on hand—a new principle in labor journalism, perhaps. For example, there was the headline "College Institutes Scholarship Drive For Southern Workers and Farmers," but in order to get it into the Fortnightly the "for" had to be changed to "to aid" because there was a lack of "R's." Maybe few people read our mailing permit, but when that chap "J" in January disappears we'll have to set the permit in some other type because that "J" is the only one in the Commonwealth printshop.

The press, an old Golden Jobber but a rather unique and elaborate antiquity at that, broadcasts its "power" with a bang—literally. It groans along on its worn bearings while the motor, hesitating with each "bang," emits a sound somewhere between that of a kitten and a thrashing machine, with a tendency toward the latter.

The press also offers its problems. Occasionally, after having spent several hours trying to get an even impression—since the bed of the press must be adjusted to each form—it prints a few impressions and then there is a remarkable fadeout. This necessitates a complete readjustment.

But all is not wise in the printshop! More than Fortnightly's are thrashed out there. Freedom of speech reigns supreme, and if the students that work there four hours a day do not leave "Commonwealth" with a general knowledge of printing, they will leave as amazing theoreticians! Everything is discussed from the "pro-literate" to the illiterate. At present the printshop staff...
The Library

The Commonwealth Library is ever a busy place. The task of meeting the demands of an inquisitive and serious student body not only for specific knowledge, but for general sources of information is a varied and endless one.

Probably the most interesting part of the work is what librarians call reference work, aiding the student or teacher to find answers for the specific questions on which he is working. One boy wants some material on the condition of youth in the South; another is writing a paper on the growth of monopoly and is looking for charts of diagrams of typical large corporations. As this is written three students come in from the Farm Problems class looking for copies of the constitutions and other documents of southern farmers’ organizations. Some questions, such as that concerning the size of the presidential vote in 1932, are answered by a moment’s reference to a handbook; others, a request for material on fascism for example, involve the consulting of a dozen books and pamphlets, the compiling of a reading list and, not infrequently, a general discussion of the whole subject.

Some inquiries and lines of study lend far afield. A recent inquiry by the Farm Problems teacher concerning the literature on that topic led to the borrowing of half a dozen volumes from libraries as far away as Washington and California.

Less interesting, perhaps, but more important, is the maintenance of the “reserve collection.” The library supplies all textbooks and collateral reading needed for the classes. Each quarter the books needed for classwork are placed in the “reserve stack.” Seeing that these books are always in order, are kept in the library and always available for use consumes a good share of the librarian’s time and nervous energy. Not the smallest problem is the alloting and distributing of copies of the most frequently used books among the different classes so that needs may be met and material kept in con-

Tobacco Land

BY DAVID SHRINER

This is tobacco land.

Now, with autumn tiger-backed upon the hills, and the late sun warm to touch the fields, George LaCasse farmer, cuts his plug with a jack-knife and reaps, between chew and spitting, the broad juice laden leaves.

In the after evening at their slow wood fire his wife and he mellow their teeth on corncocks while his sons, from Martin down to LeRoy, ten, roll their own in precise, white, store-bought papers with practiced pleasure in the many tiny rituals of smoking.

For there’s little left to talk about except the cutthroat competition of the frost, the banks, and why that extra blue-square stamp on every plug and chew, each tailor-made from Chesterfield to Wings! “One nickel to the State!” And why this whole strange tax upon tobacco in their own tobacco land.

There are taxes on each retailed hawker, taxes on each sack of food and fodder, but Martin and old Dad LaCasse shoo the young ones off to bed, bed down themselves, and beat the sun into the fields next morning to snatch the precious leaves from the sudden claws of autumn and the time when the sleet wind jimmies the boarding of their shack and snow has followed the hoar-frost; when prices cut another notch to see the State through winter; when old Dad LaCasse and all his sons from Martin through LeRoy will huddle by the embers of their fire and cuss the taxes on just tobacco?

[FALSE WITNESS from page two] the people of Polk County that Reverend Summers use his pulpit for the propagation of good, of helping the needy, the sick and the poor. At the very time Summers was inciting hatred against the school, Commonwealth representatives were at the sickbed of the Horneman boy, one of our neighbors. The school arranged for the boy’s transportation to and treatment in a private hospital in Mena and consoled and helped the grief-stricken parents. We urge Reverend Summers to go and do likewise.

The Kitchen

A cook at Commonwealth has a different problem than one who works in a restaurant. Commonwealth is a very large and poor family of from sixty to seventy people. The expense for one meal for one person is between eight and eight and one-half cents. Like millions of work and farm women, Commonwealth must figure with pennies in order to bring meals regularly on the table.

Even so the meals are better than a year ago. There are no “mass demonstrations” for better food. This is due to careful planning and economy and strict control over the food supply.

At Commonwealth the cook must also be an educator. The students and others who work in the kitchen receive a practical education in self-discipline and responsibility to the whole group. Since no salaries are paid the interest must be in the work itself. The kitchen manager must control the food supply. Private privileges cannot be permitted even though strictness causes pique. The kitchen manager must plan and organize, stand firm against special privilege and develop a spirit of cooperation.

The kitchen equipment is inadequate, and with Christmas drawing near the kitchen is hoping for a visit from Santa Claus. There are hopes that he will remember the school with a modern coffee percolator. Former students have promised to contribute one. With better equipment work would be more efficient and pleasant.

Friend Supports College

Unable to give financial aid, a friend of Commonwealth in Washington, D. C., used his influence to have a letter on the school printed in the Washington Post. Commonwealth’s secretary wrote the friend: “The letter published in the Post is as good as gold to us. It means new contacts, new students, and more supporters to help us with our work.”
Building a Bridge

BY NAY BROWN

The night before election day the foot bridge over Mill Creek was washed out. A political prognosticator might have considered such an "act of God" as indicative of victory at the polls for whichever party he might favor, but we at Commonwealth, being realistically minded, were prone to consider it due to the heavy rains of the previous few days.

If one should wish to carry the inquest further, we would have the assurance of our Farm Problems instructor that, far from being an "act of God" such a flood in large part is merely the "antithesis of drouth."

But my purpose is to describe in detail the construction of a simple form of suspension bridge common in the Ozarkitas. Naturally, the replacement was begun immediately, using lumber and cables salvaged from the wreck. Matt Mackie, head carpenter, was chief engineer, with Ralph Field, Commonwealth utility man, assisting. Several students supplied the unskilled labor power. For ingenuity, workmanship and economy Mackie has no equal, and that is saying as little about him as he has little to say.

The old bridge was a haphazard structure utilizing trees for foundations. In their place, and at safer distances from the banks, piers were constructed, each consisting of two heavy posts set about a yard apart and a yard deep with a cross beam at the height of a man's head over which the cables were stretched. On the campus side of the creek the cables were anchored to a "dead man" buried five feet in the ground, consisting of a discarded automobile frame. On the farm side the cables were anchored around a large oak tree with a girdle of two-by-fours to prevent the cable cutting into the bark. The floor of the bridge was laid from both ends, crosswise on the cables, and was held in place along both edges by stringers above and below which were bolted together.

We are just as proud of our suspension bridge as Friesco will be of its span over the Golden Gate- and why not? For while the mechanical principle embodied in it is no different, the social principle which all Commonwealth construction symbolizes ultimately will be the means of achievements greater than America has ever seen.

PRINTED AT COMMONWEALTH
BY STUDENT AND TEACHER LABOR

Published twice a month at Mena, Arkansas, by Commonwealth College. Subscription one dollar a year. Entered as second class matter January 30, 1910, at the post office at Mena, Arkansas, under the act of August 24, 1912.

LIBRARY
[stunt use. Despite all their other activities Commonwealth students find time for extra reading. During a quarter the average student will read about fifteen books in addition to his regular class assignments. Many students want suggestions as to what to read, what is newest, or most important or most entertaining. A few are following a definite line of study in some particular subject and want advice as to sources or suggestions about organization of their work. All this is part of the librarian's job.

Another part of the task is keeping an eye on the stream of literature about the labor movement that is constantly coming in by gift and purchase, sifting it out and calling important items to the attention of teachers or students who may be specially interested in a certain topic.

But the work of the library is no longer confined strictly to the campus group. Inquiries are constantly coming in for lists of books on sharecropping, on fascism or other current topics. Throughout the year many bundles of pamphlets or magazines are sent out to workers who do not have access to a library. Occasionally an inquiry comes from another labor school about what books to buy or about some point in library technique.

These are merely scattered examples of the varied work of the library in meeting the needs and demands of students and teachers for books and information on all phases of the labor movement. Commonwealth library is now probably better equipped with adequate catalogs, reference and handbooks, special lists and trained personnel than any similar institution in the country.

HISTORY
[from page one]

Librarian Wanted

The Commonwealth College Librarian wants a full time librarian. Professional training or experience necessary, both preferred. Compensation in form of all necessary living expenses. In applying state fully experience or training and give references. Reply to Commonwealth College, Mena, Arkansas.

HISTORY
[from page two]

Includes Cullen "Dooley" Ott of Louisiana and Bill Rohn of Michigan, students, and Norman Law, printer.

Only recently did it dawn upon the printers that the FOOTNOTE was now being set in "bourgeois" type! Formerly it was set in 10 point ("long primer," as it is named) light face type, which was so badly worn that more than one person was under the impression that it was boldface. Last spring the FOOTNOTE changed to nine point ("bourgeois") which, while increasing the content of the paper about 50 percent and being much less worn, is rather badly knickked.

It was hoped that there would be enough type to set all four pages before "throwing in" or distributing the type, but that hope faded when it was found that there is only enough type for three pages, at best. This simply means that two pages must be set up and "turn down" each week.

Besides the FOOTNOTE, the printshop puts out office stationery, library forms, etc., for the College.

PRINTED AT COMMONWEALTH
BY STUDENT AND TEACHER LABOR

Published twice a month at Mena, Arkansas, by Commonwealth College. Subscription one dollar a year. Entered as second class matter January 30, 1910, at the post office at Mena, Arkansas, under the act of August 24, 1912.