Spring Term Opens With Forty Students

Large Range of Occupations, Besides Sharecropping, Represented

The Spring quarter at Commonwealth has gotten under way smoothly with a capacity enrollment of forty students. The South has furnished the largest number of students—a total of sixteen. Fifteen are from the eastern states, and nine from middle-western.

The largest group representing a single occupation comes from agriculture, with eight sharecroppers, three farmers and one agricultural worker. Representative of the student body as a whole are the following occupations: a miner, a timberworker, two printers, textile worker, a reporter, a machinist, a nurse, a CCC boy, four office workers, a teacher.

The enrollment indicates a most popular interest in the political economy, history of the labor movement and labor journalism courses. Running these a close second are the courses in farm organization, public speaking and advanced and creative writing. Seven students are enrolled for drawing, poster and leaflet design. Nine are enrolled for the labor orientation course. Five are studying imperialism and fascism. Six are learning to type.

Sixteen of the spring quarter students are staying on from the previous term. Twenty four have enrolled for the first time. Nearly all of the students have had previous experience in the labor movement. Nearly a third have come upon the advice of their organizations.

Students carry white squares of paper across the campus. They have pencils with large, soft leads. They are learning to draw, make leaflets, posters for the parades and strikes of tomorrow. They will inscribe on banners: "Workers of the World Unite!"

Attention Women!

Here's how you can help!
Commonwealth needs bedding badly—sheets, pillow cases, blankets, quilts, comforts (or the material with which to make them). It doesn't make any difference what condition they’re in—we'll fix them up when they get here. If you can't afford to pay the transportation, ship them freight or express collect. We're in the "sunny south," but the nights are plenty cold (even in the summer).

Charlotte Moskowitz
Barbara Whitten
Housing Managers

Sharecroppers Arrive To Get Training

Stories of Sharecroppers' Fight Related to Student Body

By Rex Pitkin

The story of the sharecroppers' fight for organization, a story which has added a rich, new page to American labor history, was simply told last week by some of the men and women who have led the struggles of the croppers.

The eight sharecroppers who were awarded scholarships to Commonwealth in order that they may better fit themselves for organizational tasks now before the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, stood in the Common—and described to the newly assembled student body the reign of terror that has faced the union in its attempts to root itself among Negro and white tenants.

Dolly Bristow, aged, pipe-smoking, militant, told of the country clergyman who attempted to dissuade croppers from organizing and how union members resisted the efforts of the planters and their agents to prevent them from exercising their fundamental rights to join a union. Dolly pointed out that Negro discrimination was an economic weapon used by the landlords to keep their tenants from organizing for better conditions. "And I'll tell that to the planters themselves," she said.

Myrtle Moskop, wife of a union organizer, related the story of her arrest for distributing leaflets during the cotton pickers' strike last fall. Married with her husband for eight days, they were trailed along country roads by a car full of deputy sheriffs before they were arrested. They were not released until after the strike was over—and no charges were pressed against them.

Roy Morelock, who has just received his organizer's commission from the American labor movement presented in forceful determined language a picture of how he was hounded by the "law" because he went about his job talking to croppers and explaining to them the principles of un-
Blind Led By Blind
By Gale Bascombe

I'M REPRESENTING the Society For The Blind. Hans, the blind salesman, would say to the housewives. Our doorbell pushing often brought no one to the door. More than once I knew the answer to Hans' question—"Is everyone still in bed?" A curtain would move, betraying a hidden figure—or I saw someone standing in the counter-light.

Only once in a while did we get the door slammed in our faces. Hans never saw the cross and Savage greetings he nearly got from housewives who had no when they discovered he was blind.

Hans wanted me to understand he was class conscious. "I'm a strong labor man," he would say. "Miss Rand calls me 'the Bolshevik,' she thinks I'm terrible because I'm on to her game. She gets three hundred a month regularly—besides the graft. She knows I try to figure out where all the money goes from the funds for the blind which we never get. I've cornered her about the commissions on sales. People call the society and leave orders. The salesman in whose territory they go has no way of checking up. It's pure gravy for somebody—and she keeps the books.

We spoke of the pension bill pending, in the legislature. It would, if passed, give each blind person in the state thirty dollars a month. "The blind are for it almost one hundred percent," Hans told me, "but Miss Rand and her gang are fighting hard against it. She doesn't want to lose control of the money paid to the blind. Miss Rand sure knows how to go before the Kiwanis, the churches and the women's clubs and cry about the blind. Boy! You should see her red buckets of crocodile tears, and tell them about the problems we are!" Her cases," she calls us. Her cross is the "burdens of the blind."

"Do the blind have a lobby working at the Capitol?" I inquire.

"Yes. And we even hire a lawyer; but Miss Rand always wins. Once last winter, though, I made her come across. We needed coal at our house. When I asked her for a ton she refused me. So I let her know I knew about the emergency fund set aside for such a purpose—but I didn't stop there. I went on talking until she must have thought I had no more than I really had. Anyway she started crying, and the next day she sent two tons instead of one."

After one of the first times I went out with Hans he handed me fifty cents with apologies and said: "I never thought the time would come when I'd have to pay a man so little for a half day's work!"

"That's alright," I assured him. "I'm not doing anything these days, and I know if you could afford to pay me more for guiding you around, you would do it."

Hans agreed.

About this time Hans' sales started mounting. When he got four or five dollars for his share of a morning's work, I liked to think it was largely because I guided him to that house off the beaten path—that a less thorough soliciting would have missed. Hans gradually added the distinction of being the best blind salesman to his reputation of being the best blind workman. Yet as Hans prospered there was no mention of a raise for me. Instead he confided "I had it out with Miss Rand today."

"What?" I asked.

"I've been trying to get the society to pay for my guide. You've got to go after what you want. That's the way I get the four tokens a day. They ought to pay it—when you consider the advertising you do for the society—selling and leaving cards. Your sales make work for all blind workmen. Once I got the society paying the fifty cents a day for my guide. I'm going after a straight guarantee of a dollar a day for myself." Hans seemed to know exactly what he was after.

Then there was a period of about two weeks when, though the weather was fair, Hans failed to go out selling. When we finally got started again I asked what the trouble was.

"We had a big fight at the shop," he blurted out, "me and Dave Rowe. I've been making rugs all week—that's what we tangled over."

"But I thought Dave was the only one at the shop that made rugs?"

"He was. But I got some extra rug orders last week. Dave is so damn slow I thought he wouldn't get them out in time. So I started in weaving some and he got sore. I even had to make a couple sauce pages.

SANDFORD LEAVES

Marvin Sanford, journalism teacher, has left to spend three months in the North and East. He will study the various labor libraries and private collections of interest in the field of labor journalism. Incidentally, he will fulfill a desire to see the big May Day demonstrations in New York City. Sanford spent many years in the labor movement out on the West Coast.

DICTIONARIES NEEDED

Commonwealth's Industrial-Sharecropper Division is calling for Standard dictionaries to aid these students in learning to read and write English. We shall appreciate having FORTNIGHTLY readers send down their extra copies.
of his over. They have been coming back. One white one he never did get right until I fixed it up. But the day I started working, Dave went home mad and has been sulking ever since until yesterday when he came back to work."

"But, I protested mildly, "take for example dust mops. I've heard you say each person has his own work and territory, and no one has the right to sell dust mops in the other fellow's territory." "That's different," was Hans' brief answer.

Then Hans began to make money. There was a boom in rubber door mats. Practical, durable and inexpensive. Many housewives ordered. Hans kept busy changing strips from old rubber tires into the finished product. He pocketed 80 per cent of the selling price. One morning he greeted me with a worried expression. The orders are coming in so fast Miss Rand is going to start another guy making rubber door mats. He needs the work, and she thinks there is too much business for one.

"Business is rushing. You ought to be happy," I exclaimed.

"I told Miss Rand if she gives my work to anyone else I'll quit selling," Hans looked so hard I knew he meant it.

About this time weeks passed without Hans calling me. Then I learned through the Replacement Bureau for Handicapped, that Hans had found someone with a car to take him around.

The news pleased me. It was much better. Now Hans wouldn't have to get on and off streetcars. Mr. Reed of the Replacement Bureau let me know he had another blind man. Instead I excused myself with the plea that I expected to leave the city shortly.

Then I heard that Hans wanted me back. His driver had gone to work on WPA. I didn't take the job.

FLOOD NEWS
John Domurad traveled over two thousand miles from Massachusetts to take classes at Commonwealth. On the way down he stopped in Milwaukee to picket with the Newspaper Guild strikers. He was ready to start classes when the eastern flood news reached him carrying him back to his home—not, not his home. The telegram said he had no home. It had been washed away. John left the same night to help his family through a crisis.

VISIT HERE
Mr. and Mrs. Needleman of Chicago, active in the League Against War and Fascism, and Morris Panzer of Philadelphia spent a half day at the college.

Am I At College?
By Bill Rubens

COMMONWEALTH isn't a college or else institutions that I've been to, like Clark University in Massachussets and Stanford University in California. I should have another title. I have arrived at this conclusion by a series of selfquestionings and comparisons.

Where, oh where at Commonwealth is the hundred-tiered football stadium with its quota of rah-rah whirling der­vishes? The gilded gas buggies that race down the campus highways, past a glorified collection of million dollar buildings, all with the latest improve­ments, including space for stretching in class—where are they?

As far as I can discover the nearest thing to such fixtures of college life as cheer leaders here at Commonwealth are the picket line leaders.

The average run-of-the-mill Common­wealth student would bewilder the average professor. The poor man probably would enter a classroom only after making out his will. Because none of these overalled, determined students seem to have come to Commonwealth to carry on the family tradition at the sacred school, or to make future contacts for the insurance business. If most of the fathers of Commonwealth stu­dents—and mothers, too—ever went beyond the sixth grade in that leaky old schoolhouse at the crossroads, it was primarily because the mill bosses and the landowners couldn't use any more hands.

If the typical board of trustees at any of the "recognized" colleges ever got wind of a college faculty on which not one member has ever published pro­fusely on such themes as the "Influence of the Semi-Colon on the Elizabethan Period," it would require another war to revive their spirits.

It is difficult to view a college, if it be such, without a Dean. The office of Dean is another fixture at our standard col­leges. His duties are two-fold. First to bail out drunken student drivers and to have a wife who can pour a pleasant cup of tea at the fortnightly faculty­student receptions, where a pleasant time is had by the handful of students and faculty who show up in a discussion of the football prospects. The dean also has another function, which makes his college so invaluable to the solid citi­zens of the community. He must shel­ter the students from life, which means a strict supervision of the Current Events Club, among others.

"Bring kids home for dinner, is another point against calling Commonwealth a college." Without exception they are vulgarly utilitarian, taught in order that they may be applied outside. I have known professors in collegi­ate institutions who, at the beginning of every course, would announce that criticism would be gratefully accept­ed, until it was offered. Then, somehow, the professor called you when you were not prepared.

Really interesting discussions in these accredited universities would be limited to the informal "bull sessions" in the dormitory rooms, where the rich­est student present would boast about his chorus girl acquaintances.

That never was anything like the open forums held by the crackling light
Campus Notes

"Volley ball!" An invitation and a battle cry shouted to no one in particular. After lunch and dinner, after the patterns of campus sport. Result, this year's peach crop was killed in the bud. The crop would have been worth several hundred dollars to the school.

Claude Gower and his wife, Virginia Donaldson, have left the college for Long Island New York. Claude Gower was a member of the Commonwealth Association and farm manager. He is now finishing a novel based on the Terre Haute general strike. Virginia Donaldson is an accomplished artist.

Ridolf Schneider, From the Kingdom of Necessity.

Library Book Needs

R. P. Vance, Human Geography of the South.

Martin Anderson Nexo, Pelle the Conquerer.

Mikhail Sholokhov, And Quiet Flows the Don.

Isidor Schneider, From the Kingdom of Necessity.

Romain Rolland, Death and Birth of a World.

Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain.

Fielding Burke, A Stone Came Rolling.

Emile Burnas, Handbook of Marxism.

Maxim Gorky, Belomor.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Soviet Communism.

Trade Union Education Needed For Workers

Director Whitten Stresses Importance of Workers' Classes

If the American labor movement is to succeed in organizing millions of men and women in mine and mill, factory and farm, workers' education will have to play an increasingly important role in the life of the trade unions.

Such was the opinion of Richard Babb Whitten, director of Commonwealth College in a talk before the newly assembled student body. Whitten told the Commons that unless unions executed a full program of education they could not succeed in rallying workers in the fight for higher wages and better living conditions. He stressed the following points:

The education of trade unionists should begin in the union hall itself. Union meetings should schedule educational talks and develop athletic and dramatic programs. He illustrated by pointing to the example of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union.

Larger industrial centers should establish evening labor schools where workers may better study the system in which they live.

A network of summer schools for workers should be founded.

Resident labor schools should be developed to serve the particular needs of the region in which they exist in order that they may intensively train workers for particular tasks within the labor movement.

Whitten talked about the orientation of Commonwealth to organized labor in the South and of the tasks confronting the movement in the fight against fascism in Dixie.

He showed them how demagogues like Long, Talmadge, Bilbo, and reformists like Townsend, have won mass followings below the Mason-Dixon line in the North.

He said that a persistent and energetic campaign must be inaugurated immediately to organize the workers, and that Commonwealth, as a resident labor college, must play its part. A Farmer-Labor Party to break the workers away from the two old parties was advocated by Whitten so that workers' rights may be defended and extended.

The history of workers' education in America was traced and a vigorous discussion followed.