College Lecturers Visit STFU Locals

ClauDE WILLIAMS, Commonwealth director, and Peter Wartiainen, lecturer on cooperatives, carried the college educational program into eastern Arkansas last week by delivering lectures before half a dozen locals of the state. "With a Farmers' Union in the plantation country," Wartiainen said, "we got along very well." The two worked in conjunction with representatives of the STFU, traveling part of the time with D. A. Griffin and the remainder with W. L. Blackstone, both members of the STFU national executive board.

Attending meetings at rural churches and schoolhouses, Williams and Wartiainen addressed the sharecroppers and laborers their problems and prospects. Williams' chief purpose on the tour was to explain to STFU members the new plans and duties of the organization in line with its entry into the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, a CIO union.

Wartiainen was particularly interested in laying the groundwork for possible cooperative canneries, medical centers, and stores to be conducted by the union locals, and found his suggestions enthusiastically received. A native of Fitchburg, Mass., he was unacquainted with the South before his recent lecture series at Commonwealth, and the response of stamping feet and chorused "Amens!" represented a new experience for him as a speaker. He was appalled, like other Northerners, by the poverty and repression of the plantation workers. His impressions were given to Commonwealth students at a forum discussion held at the college Sunday night after the trip.

Wartiainen observed that the conditions were largely the result of absentee ownership and virtual elimination of the "milieu" and "agricultural program," he said, "There is no reason that the sharecroppers should not have as good a living standard as anyone else, and thus remove the constant threat of a cheap man-power supply which hangs over organized labor in all Southern industry."

COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION MEETING

Plans Extensive Program for School

Labor Leaders Gather From Five States to Attend Sessions of Reorganized College Governing Body; Approve Measures Already Adopted

Labor leaders from five states assembled at Commonwealth over December 4 and 5 to attend the first annual meeting of the Commonwealth Association, the reorganized college governing body, and to consider measures for increasing the school's effectiveness in building the labor movement.

Non-resident members of the Association present were J. B. Butler, president of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union; William L. Seminole, Okla., president of Local 731, International Typographical Union; E. E. Justice, Fort Smith, Ark., business agent of the Bricklayers' Union in that city; Edward M. Norman, Winter Haven, Fla., secretary-treasurer of the Citrus Workers' Organizing Committee; and John Woodruff, Goose Creek, Texas, organizer for the American Federation of Teachers. Other union leaders from Oklahoma City and Fort Smith also attended.

The Association unanimously endorsed the Commonwealth program of extension and resident activity, as detailed in the last issue of the Fortnightly, and approved the constitutional changes which had been made by the Administrative Council. It determined to enlarge its membership from twenty-one to twenty-four, adding three non-resident members, so that the college's governing body will be equally divided between resident and non-resident, twelve of each. The three additional members, like the present nine of the non-resident group, will be labor union leaders.

Plans were discussed for extending the college's educational program to the oil workers of Texas and Oklahoma by sending faculty members on field trips through the locals there. The possibility of bringing groups of union leaders in various industries to Commonwealth for weekend courses in organization, contract negotiation, and methods of fighting injunctions was also considered. Edward Norman pointed out that his Florida territory was so far from the college as to preclude any possibility of extension work there, and requested that scholarships be made available to give leaders among the citrus workers resident terms at the school. The Association agreed that the suggestion be carried out if sufficient funds are on hand, and voted to include agricultural workers from other Southern states in the scholarship program.

Aside from transacting their business, the Association members took advantage of their visit to become acquainted with the students and faculty of the school and with its physical plant. They attended classes, looked over the farm and buildings, and were introduced to the staff and student body. A special feature of the occasion was the presentation of an original play written and produced by members of the Dramatics club. The play, entitled "Ninety-seven Cents," is reproduced in its entirety in this issue.

The concluding items of the well-filled weekend were lectures Sunday afternoon by Marvin Sanford on "The South Today" and by Norman Sunday evening describing the conditions prevailing among the Florida citrus workers.

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

Because of press breakdowns and other mechanical difficulties, the Fortnightly missed four issues during the year 1937. The numbers omitted were those of July 1, No. 15; August 1, No. 15; September 15, and October 1, the last two not being assigned numbers.

All paid subscriptions will be extended for four issues in order to make up for these omissions.
NINETY-SEVEN CENTS [A Play in one act written by students of Commonwealth College and presented by them December 6, 1927, at the college]

ORIGINAL CAST
Judge—Al Tennant.
Bailiff—Steve Dusak.
Prosecutor—Dave Shane.
Defence Attorney—Norman LeFever.
George Butler—Lee Hays.
Dr. Adams—William Buttriek.
Lucy Andrews—Ruth Voilhofer.
Mk. Yeager—Peter Warttainen.
Tom Butler—Ralph Clark.
Helen Bryant—Leona Stevens.
Girl in Audience—Gertrude Lipschitz.
The Speaker—Lee Hays.

Set designed and built by Ike Dworan. Lighting supervised by Bernie Stevens. Directed by Lee Hays.

TIME - The present.
PLACE - A courtroom.

CURTAIN
The stage is dark.
There is loud applause.

A Pompous Voice:
It is a pleasure to speak to this progressive body of business men. I speak for all the officers of the Southern Dress Company when I thank you for your cordial reception. We believe that the coming of our company to Jefferson will mean increased prosperity for all of us, and for our part we are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the general welfare of the citizens of Jefferson. I assure you . . .

The voice fades.
A gavel is heard.

THE VOICE OF THE PROSECUTOR:
. . . general welfare of the citizens of Jefferson demands that justice be done in the case of the people against Helen Bryant.

Call George Butler.

THE VOICE OF THE BAILIFF:
George Butler to the stand!

LIGHTS

GEORGE BUTLER is on the stand, speaking:
Well, I was on duty down the hall a piece and when I heard all this noise naturally I went in, and all the girls was standing around this Helen here, and she was talking her head off. She knew she wasn’t supposed to talk, and I told her to get on back to work. She wouldn’t listen to me so I told her I’d have to report her to the manager. Then without any reason at all, she come right at me, run right into me, and I fell back — she had me off my guard and I stumbled over something, and the first thing I knew she had alt off of my thumb between her teeth like it was a piece of beefsteak.

PROSECUTOR:

Has the defendant ever caused trouble in the factory before?
A. She was always talking to the girls.
Q. What is the rule about talking?
A. Well, they’re not supposed to leave their work.
Q. Did she leave her work at this time?
A. Well, she was talking.
Q. What was she saying?
A. Well, she was talking real loud —
Q. Repeat some of the things she was saying.
A. Well, one thing she said, the company was stealing from the employees. Another thing, she was trying to get them to walk out.
Q. Has the company treated you fairly?
A. Never had no complaint.
Q. Have you heard any of the other employees complaining?
A. Not a one.
Q. As a result of the attack by the defendant, did you suffer injury?
A. I did.
Q. Where were you hurt?
A. Well, I hurt my head some, and my back, and I got some internal injuries, and my thumb — I couldn’t work for a week.
Q. Have you any interest in the case except to see justice done?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. What?
A. I mean, no, sir.

PROSECUTOR

Your witness.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY:
Did you strike the defendant?
A. No, sir! Well, I might have had to push her a little to get my thumb loose, but I was just as polite to her as I knew how to be.

BLACKOUT

The stage is dark; the pompous voice continues:

I assure you that we shall not fail to discharge our duties to those citizens of Jefferson who have found employment with us — the duties of employers to employees such as free medical care — the countless privileges of stewardship vouchsafed to the conscientious employer . . .

The voice fades.
Q. And do you make enough to live on?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Now, Miss Andrews, do you know the defendant?
A. Yes, sir, I work right next to her.
Q. What is her general reputation?
A. Well, she's not the easiest person in the factory to get along with.
Q. How do you mean?
A. Well, she's always trying to start trouble, always complaining, things like that.
Q. What kind of trouble?
A. She always tried to slow up the work, tried to get us to complain to the boss.
Q. Tell us what happened on November 24.
A. Well, Helen started talking about something, and then the girls came over to listen. Of course, George—Mr. Butler—came over to see what was going on, and then without any reason at all, far as I could see, Helen jumped onto George and beat up on him.

GIRL IN AUDIENCE, SHOUTING:
You're a liar, Lucy Andrews! I saw the big yellow belly pushing Helen around that day! And what's more every word she said was true! How much are you paid to make that speech, Lucy?

COMMONWEALTH:
Motion; much banging of the gavel.

THE BAILIFF IS DRAGGING HER OUT.

THE JUDGE:
Order! Order! Order!

THE GIRL:
You can't stop me from talking!

THE BAILIFF TAKES HER OUT.

THE JUDGE:
I'd hate to have to clear this courtroom! Spectators are not allowed to express approval or disapproval of the testimony. Continue.

Q. What was Butler's manner towards Helen?
A. Why, he was just as polite to her as he could be.
Q. Do you have any interest in this case except to see justice done?
A. That's my only interest.

PROSECUTOR:
That is all.

BLACKOUT

THE POMPOS VOICE:
... I repeat, it is our privilege to do these things, and we ask you not to thank us for them. Frankly, we have a self-interest in seeing Jefferson become more prosperous—the rightful self-interest of business men in making more money. You may ask why does the Southern Dress Company bring its money into our city, instead of the East, or the North, closer to the markets? In the words of your own great Governor:

"Our high percentage of Anglo-American citizenship, with an absence of the disturbing elements so common in larger industrial centers, offers a great attraction for those looking for new fields in which to establish their factories."

Surely, in the relations of honest employers and honest employees there can be no real friction except that caused by outside interference, and we have your assurance that Jefferson shall remain a free city!

Applause.

THE VOICE OF THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY:
... and if Jefferson is to remain a free city we must stop this mighty, all-powerful corporation in its attempt to railroad this citizen of our community because she spoke the truth!

The gavel taps.

"NINETY-SEVEN CENTS" was written by the Commonwealth Class in Workers' Drama, under the direction of Lee Hays, instructor, in order to treat dramatically one of the most important problems facing the South—the invasion of Southern towns by Northern industrialists in search of cheap labor. Much of the source material was drawn from Thomas A. Stork's pamphlet, "Carpetbaggers of Industry," published by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. The play is dedicated to George McLean, editor of the Tupelo (Miss.) Journal, as "one of many Southern voices courageously exposing industrial carpet-bagging."

LIGHTS

MR. YEAGER ON THE STAND.

THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY:
How long have you known Helen Bryan?
A. All her life.
Q. What connection have you had with her?
A. She worked in my store a year, and she traded with me.
Q. What is her general reputation?
A. The best. Helen is a very fine girl.
Q. When she worked in your store, did she cause any trouble?
A. No trouble at all. One of the best people that ever worked in my store.
Q. Do you see her frequently?
A. Not so much, since she got this job. Oh, she comes in to cash her check every two weeks.
Q. Do you cash checks for many of the employees?
A. A lot of them.
Q. Have you heard Helen complain about the size of her check?
A. Yes. But then, all the employees complain. Why shouldn't they? The business men are complaining too.
Q. What are their complaints?
A. Well—this Southern Dress Company came in here with a proposition we thought would help the town. Supposed to spend a million and a half in wages...

PROSECUTOR:
I object, Your Honor. The Southern Dress Company is not on trial here. Surely the line of questioning is most irrelevant.

JUDGE:
I'll have to overrule that objection. I think we're all interested in what Mr. Yeager has to say. Go on.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY:
Where were you?

YEAGER:
Well, I was saying—the company told us they'd pay out a million and a half dollars in wages in five years—at the rate they're paying the employees now it would take them fifty years to reach that! And we paid them to come in—we even built a factory for them—but the town isn't any better off than it was, it's worse off, and we're still paying the company! I don't blame the employees—the whole town's complaining!
Q. Have you any interest in testifying in this case except that justice may be done?
A. I want to see justice done! I want to see the Southern Dress Company run out of town!

BLACKOUT

THE POMPOS VOICE, WITH SYRUP ADDED:
I am reminded of the story of the two Irishmen. It seems that they were walking down the street and Pat said, Mike...

The voice fades.

The gavel.

LIGHTS

TOM BUTLER IS ON THE STAND.

THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY:
What is your connection with the defendant?
A. We are engaged.
Q. Did you see her on November 24?
A. Yes.
Q. Describe the circumstances.
A. I heard what had happened and I ran to the room where Helen worked. She had fainted but when I got there she was coming to, and I took her home.
[PLAY from page three]

Q. What was her condition?
A. She was almost hysterical, and had bruises all over her face.

Q. How long have you worked for the company?
A. Since it started.

Q. Are you satisfied with conditions in the factory?
A. Satisfied? On eight hours a week? Twelve hours a day? I'd get more satisfaction out of working on a chain gang!

Q. Have you heard any other employees complain about conditions there?
A. Godamighty, yes! That's all they talk about. That's why the company don't want us to talk—afraid we'll start something they can't stop!

[VOICEs IN AUDIENCE:]

That's the truth, now!

You tell 'em, Tom!

We're talkin' now!

The gavel is heard.

THE JUDGE:

Order! I've warned you, now. Go on.

PROSECUTOR:

Do you know George Butler?
A. Yes.

Q. What is his general reputation?
A. Well, it used to be pretty good.

Q. What is it now?
A. Well, since he got that badge to wear, he can't anybody get along with him. He thinks it gives him the right to push everybody around. I tell you, if I'd caught him shoving Helen around I'd have killed him! Ought what your interest in testifying in this case?

A. I want to see justice done. I want to see the Southern Dress Company put in its place.

THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY:

Your witness.

THE PROSECUTOR:

How well do you know George Butler?
A. He's my uncle.

BLACKOUT

THE PROSECUTOR:

Let me pause here a moment to pay tribute to your fine mayor. I value my personal friendship with him, as with all of you, and I am grateful for the opportunity to become a citizen of your city, to become your neighbor...