Churchfolk See Their Role in United Front, Work Hard for It, Says Leader

By Winifred L. Freyrott
(Ex-Commonwealth instructor and Methodist social service leader)

One set of citizens that must not be neglected by those seeking a united front against war and reaction, against all suppression of liberties and all exploitation, for democracy and for the good society, is the church group. It’s too easy to say that the church has always been at the back of the people, that it fees them up and to let it go at that. A case can be made for the condemnation, heaven knows. But it’s not quite the whole story.

The church represents a cross section of our society. All the winds that blow so on church folk. Most of these have not been so seriously the words of their ministers that they can’t listen to other voices. Politicians and gadflies of various sorts know this and act accordingly. Moreover, sitters in church pew have been exposed to something besides “opium.” Sentiments like these are scattered through their scriptures and sometimes get read from pulpits:

“I hate, I despise your feast days... though you offer me burnt offerings... I will not accept them... but let justice roll down as waters...” (Amos 5:21, 22).

“Come now, ye rich, weep and howl; Behold the hire of the laborers who have bestowed their strength upon it, which is of you kept back by fraud ere these...” (Isaiah 5:8).

“For I will exalt one who is weak, and lift up the humble...” (Luke 1:52, 53).

For a generation and more there has been a left-wing group in most of the larger Protestant denominations and among Catholics and Jewish religious groups, that has taken pains to make known the social strain in their religion and to apply it to current wrongs. When the Federal Council of Churches a few years ago collected the scattered social demands of the churches it took a score of pages just to summarize them. Here they stand - demands for adequate pay and fair work hours for workers;

Arkansawyer, Minnesotan
Head New Student Body

Floyd Martin, son of our farm manager and himself an Arkansas farm youth of long experience, will guide the spring quarter student body as its recently elected president. Preference for “country” students in leadership of campus activities appears also in the choice of Erving Ingebrightsens as secretary, an ex-candidate for Farmer-Labor representative in Minnesota.

Disciplinary committees are being revived again as an effective means of curtailing both male and girls’ living groups toward better organization of special study circles, social and athletic activity with the neighborhood youth and general upkeep. White Lodge and Garden Cottage, both faculty quarters, have already challenged the campus on the last mentioned goal.

Aside from election of entertainment and disciplinary committees for well known purposes, the student body has formed a united front committee responsible for maintaining close solidarity with the organized labor and farm movements. This body has in past quarters, with faculty participation also, thrown the weight of Commonwealth student and instructors to labor’s side in countless cases arising from economic conflicts.

Student representatives named for seats in the Commonwealth College Association, our highest authority in college affairs, are Leona Stegman and Floyd Martin.

For the abolition of all child labor; for protection of workers against the exigencies of their life and work; for the right of the workers to unionize and bargain as a group; sometimes for social ownership of special...
ACTIVE SOUTHERN YOUTH BENT ON
INTENSE STUDY FOR UNION TASKS

BY ARTHUR MCEWEN

“SHE! Sure hope I can stay another
quarter…”

They’re saying it already, this inspiring and
inspired crop of young working and
farming Americans just planted at Com-
monwealth for the spring. Serious and res-
solute about their organizing tasks back
home, left unfinished or yet to be begun,
each also possesses some of that appealing
individuality upon which the mighty col-
lective forces of the progressive farm and
labor movements are being built today.

No, it’s not declasse, tranquilly useless
individualism which characterized the free
but bewirled post-war generation of young
escapists. Those folks have a real,
worthwhile purpose in life—to become
capable union builders, organizers of the
American People’s Front.

The vast organizational drives now
sweeping up and down the land actually
beg for such fresh forces. That is why a
goodly number of new students left their
posts with some reluctance at the coming
here for three months’ intense study, so
anxious are they to get back into the har-
ness of daily struggle. Yet, they at once see
the need for much more training than can
possibly be provided within such scant
time.

From 13 states, most of them southern,
has come one of the all-around best car-
load lots of students that Commonwealth has
seen in many a quarter. The partial roster
deserves a glance:

A Steel Workers Organizing Com-
mittee youth from Indiana. Workers’ Alliance or-
ganizers from Missouri and New York, oil
drillers from Oklahoma, a Missouri dairy-
man, a textile strike leader of Tennessee, a
Chicago translator, a New York City nurse,
a California teacher, a Mississippi news-
paper woman, Arkansas hill farmers, a lib-
rarian from Michigan, a salesman from Al-
abama and some more.

More students, especially impoverished
southerners, could have been accepted but
for exhaustion of our scholarship fund.
Those who did raise their tuition did so at
great sacrifice.

But all expect to take out a great deal
more in knowledge and training than was
ever invested in time and money. And that
is what Commonwealth exists for.

A few students who do not yet have a de-
finite place in the labor or farm fields are
looking now at both for a choice to make
soon. In either big outlet there is no lack
of opportunity whatever. The lack is one of
livelihood and decent conditions, one which
can only be remedied for the mass of Am-
erican youths (and oldsters) by the militant
and progressive action into which our
state three

B O O K S

T. A. Jackson brings to his study of
Marxian philosophy (“Dialectics: The Log-
ic of Marxism, and Its Critics—An Essay
in Exploration” by T. A. Jackson, Interna-
tional Publishers, 616 pages, $2.50) the
experience of over a quarter of a century in
the English labor movement. It is charac-
teristic of him as a man of action that he
should consider dialectics and materialism
in the light of the uses that history has made
of these two component parts of the Marx-
ian world view. Hence, “Dialectics” is de-
veloped in three parts: (1) the historical
background and a commentary on Marx’s
works both in philosophy and economics,
(2) the post-Marxian developments and,
(3) a survey and criticism of Marx’s criti-
cism. The volume under review is an excel-
lent example of the uses of dialectics in itself.
Jackson, master of the method that he is,
carefully describes the historical (dialect-
ical) development of Marxism together with
a critical examination of the contribu-
tions of Lenin and Stalin.

As the most thorough-going popular sur-
vey of the dialectic method to date, Jack-
son’s “Dialectics” belongs on the shelf of
any who would claim even passing acquaint-
ance with important currents in present-day
philosophy.

A R

Writers Mull Union's New
"Free Presentation Plan"

While America’s organized authors
are about to scrap the unwritten lit-
ery taboo on sending manuscript to more
than one publisher at a time, Common-
wealth Local 2, second eldest of the Ameri-
Can Writers Union nationwide chain now
exceeding 300, is enlisting over the union’s
“free presentation plan” to smash this big
economic shackles. Various locals and oth-
er groups of word-millers are likewise going
over the new scheme, many having already
given it a unanimous whoop of acceptance.

Hollywood script writers today submit
their photoplays to all producers, then re-
ceive competitive bids. Fictioneers and
non-fictionists, however, don’t want to
send their stuff to all outlets at once be-
cause, first, they haven’t enough stamps,
and second, they are human and would like
to see something besides editor’s baldheads
once in a while. They, especially the short-
storyists, do want the privilege, none-
theless, of sending manuscript out in multiple
without danger of reprisal. That depends
on how soon and how solidly they see this
new light which the A.W.U. has hung in its
doorway.

Backward magazine editors and book
publishers will view it with horror, as will
their satellites ready to regale their
weary spines and hoard at the writers
“Dogg! Biting the hand that feeds you!”

And thus more writers will learn that it’s
better not to depend upon any one hand for
a meal.

The “free presentation plan” offered to
all authors in every field by the A.W.U. is
really in comparison the mildest of reforms
(though it will strengthen writers’ earning
power) in an exploitive industry that could
well endure severe changes. Since writers,
too, live in a world of laissez faire grocery
bills, it’s high time they abandon the feudal
sharecrop method of distributing their art
wares.

Further details on the plan may be ob-
tained from Arthur McEwen, Local 2 secre-
tary, or from A.W.U. national head-
quarters at 215 Second Avenue, New York City.

NEW CHIEF DONS APRON

Famous as the first Commonwealth cook
to make a goat kid jump into a cauldron of
rice and thereby create a lastingly popular
hors d’oeuvre, Will Roesel has just added
his two-year kitchen career here to work in
the North, succeeded at the skillets by Fred
Freer. While the loss of Willi as a trusted
adviser is sharply felt by the Common-
wealth College Association, faculty and
student body, Fred is still up nights study-
ing the admirable kitchen technique he has
now inherited.
5 Millions Hell-Bound
BY EARL PERRINS
"WILD BOYS SACK FARMHOUSE"
"YOUTH SHOOTS MOTORIST"
"YOUNG CON-MEN NABBED"

Those headlines gimlet into your brain every day—like street car ads. What's the story behind them? The "dry rot of idleness, lack of opportunity for work or for study." That's the story behind those headlines according to Joseph Cadden, executive secretary of the American Youth Congress, in his article, "Pluck and Luck," appearing in the April issue of "The Fight," monthly publication of the American League Against War and Fascism.

Cadden talks turkey. Here are some facts he has compiled: Out of 20,000,000 Americans between the ages of 16 and 25—7,500,000 have "jobs.") 4,500,000 go to school or college. 2,500,000 are married women who neither go to school nor work.

The rest, 5,000,000, "are just hanging around," waiting for the "temporary depression" to go its weary way.

Of these idle 5,000,000 young people, 350,000 are absorbed by C.C.C. camps, 415,000 are taken care of by the National Youth Administration, and 210,000 are given "staff times" to gang up and storm a town. For social life they join mobs.

"Add and then subtract," says Cadden, "and you still have 6,000,000 young Americans standing on street corners, plotting robberies, playing craps, drawn into mobs.

In short, we still have 5,000,000 young people left to make more headlines. Or storm troopers. It's possible. Listen to Cadden: "In 1926 I was arrested in the Milan railroad station because I had a penknife in my suitcase. I was taken to a lounge in the station used by the blackshirts, and was there long enough to discover they were in the service of Mussolini because they were promised more food, better clothes, and plenty of time to drink wine and play cards. They weren't political followers. They weren't intellectually convinced that Mussolini was right. They were Italy's unemployed young people who had been exposed to almost no education, who had never had an opportunity to work or even train for a job."

"In 1930 I was in Munich living with some impoverished students. Each evening we went to a beer hall where free lunch was served. It was filled with young people of Munich, who had never had an opportunity for jobs or adequate schooling and students who could barely afford to stay at the university. It was there that I heard the name, Hitler, for the first time in my life."

So Cadden comes to the very clear-headed conclusion that "5,000,000 young people in the United States are heading for the same hell."

Which brings us smack up against the important question: What can we do to prevent this "same hell" from happening here?

We can do this: help all those progressive young people who are trying to organize these 5,000,000 unorganized youth.

Work for the passage of the American Youth Act—the Benson-Amile Bill—which provides for jobs, vocational training, and other educational opportunities for young people between the ages of 16 and 25.

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Minnesota Co-ops Gain Thru Farm-Labor Party
BY ERVING INGEBRIOTSEN

(Our dairyman-student from Minnesota, where he was a Farmer-Labor candidate for state representative in 1936—Editor)

MINNESOTA is the co-operative North Star of the United States. Among its 2,627,000 people more than 4,000 co-op enterprises flourish. These ventures tally up to roughly an eighth of the total in our nation today. Enjoying and maintaining them are some 144,000 farmers and 75,000 consumers, and a grand total of

PAPERS FROM AFAR....

ALL NEWS THAT LABOR PRINTS—The leading liberal and labor newspapers and magazines come to Commonwealth from every corner of the globe, and the students make the above library rack their mecca at all hours.

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from page two

Active Southern Youth Bent on Intense Study for Union Tasks...

"Graduates" throw their energy.

While some of the new Commoners have already volunteered themselves on the political front, too, others have no particular affiliation. All, however, are deeply concerned with the struggle against reaction on all fronts. The advance of the Farmer-Labor Party's Student League is becoming as significant to them and the workers or farmers they represent as are unionism and modern education.

There's plenty more to be heard about this spring 1937 student body, that we can promise in advance to Fortnightly readers and to a forward-looking public. Watch for forthcoming issues in which these Commoners will tell some of it themselves.
from page one

Churchfolk See Their Role In United Front, Work Hard For It, Says Leader

utilities; occasionally one for the complete transformation of society.

Recently some of these left-wing groups and individuals have come together in a United Christian Council for Democracy. They have taken their stand forthrightly for the continuance of the church-seeking society and for effort to establish a social economy that will include "social ownership and democratic control of the common means of life." And they sturdy propose to "support the necessary political and economic action" for the realization of these aims.

In the meantime, it is not uncommon for church individuals and groups to get into the social fray in their communities. Among simpler sections of our population, where the church is still the center of social life, it is spontaneously used in any social struggle that may develop. Sharecroppers meet in churches (until planter and riding boss interfere), are often led by their preachers, pass readily from church hymn to union song, pray God's blessing on their fight. Negroes in northern cities organizing Scottsboro, Herndon, "Free Ethiopia" or National Negro Congress meetings use their churches and their preachers.

Among church folk, it is usually only a socially-minded few who participate in left-wing movements and that outside their regular church activities. But the American League Against War and Fascism has enlisted thousands of church folk the country over. And organized church youth are to be found with the Student Union and other youth groups in the anti-war strikes and in the struggle for economic and race justice.

There is scarcely a strike of any proportions nowadays that does not bring a few preachers into the conflict on the side of the strikers (though more are to be found on the other side while the overwhelming majority "stick to the gospel" and leave strikes alone).

Several Detroit and Flint preachers took a hand in the General Motors strike. Together with some local professors they assigned themselves to the job of running down rumors and publicizing the facts. Hearing that a Flint hospital had been warned to prepare for an emergency, they straightway made contact with Flint officials and warned them that they would be held responsible for violence. When the situation reached a point of intensity, they sent out a call to preachers, arranged a meeting, besought Governor Murphy to prevent the threatened violence by vigilantes (many of whom were church folk) letting him know that they as clergymen would support him wholeheartedly in such effort. To police Commissioner Wills they wired, "We learn you intend to draft citizens in a vigilante attempt tooust sit-down strikers without court order. We beseech you to refrain from use of this kind of force at this time. We shall hold you strictly responsible for any loss of life.

Just because preachers are 'respectable' such protests count.

Of course such preachers stand to lose their jobs if big business parishioners or reactionary high-up church officials take a notion to penalize them. Some are willing to pay the price. A goodly fraction of them have done so, supported by brave wives. That is up to them. What is up to those organizing united fronts, is to find and use such preachers and other willing church folk, especially church youth.

from page three

NOTED GRADS REVISIT

Jim Porter and Eugene David, whose start in the labor movement dates seven years back to when they were students here, devoted their brief vacation that organizers get to revisiting the campus last week. Jim is a prominent figure in the Iowa Farmer-Labor Party movement, while Gene has for long directed Chicago Workers School, second largest of its sort in the country.

The price of a visit is a speech apiece. Commonsists insisted, so Jim related how progressives in the Farmer-Labor Party resurrected successfully resisted Coughlin's Union Party disruptors, followed by Gene with a discourse upon dialectical materialism, in which field he is a specialist.

'JOE JONES SAID . . .' Ever since Joe Jones, "the internationally known young poet who did the mural at Commonwealth," passed through here en route to the Dust Bowl with his movie camera, in fact for over a week Commonsites have been quoting him on Mexico.

Joe gathered the campus around himself beneath a tree and rambled for an intent hour about his recent picture-shooting expedition into Mexico's factories, farms and political circles. His glowing account of vanguard artists and workers' cultural missions into the backward countryside stirred our whole population to the point of letting dinner get cold, which is the highest tribute possible for any speaker here.

For his illustrious work of recent years, particularly his creation of the much-debated mural in the old St. Louis court house, Joe has recently been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. The ruinous storms in the Southwest and Texas pan-handles have caused a human catastrophe that cries for the attention of lens and brush, Joe feels, so he is going to use the grant to finance several months graphic research there.

Minnesota Co-ops Gain Through Farmer-Labor Party patrons adding up to 531,000.

Hence, it is indeed easy to realize that the people of Minnesota are rapidly awakening to the fact that economic security for the masses—the workers and farmers—can and must be attained by a fundamental change in the existing economic system. We can see, too, that only through such a wholesale reorganization can the truest essence of democracy be established and the present socio-economic inequalities be abolished.

Co-operatives are an example of democracy at its best. Every member is a shareholder and therefore a "boss." Each one has one vote and only one, which determines directly the policies and leadership of the mutual association. Management is shired by an elected director or by vote of the entire membership. These employees thus act only under majority rule.

Significant also is this: Since 1935 the number of co-op failures has remained at less than a half of one per cent, and these were due largely to economic pressure of capitalism upon small enterprises generally.

A highest example of co-operation in action appears before us in a political form. The Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota was founded upon co-operative principles. It represents a co-operative political association which has assumed the task of applying modern political economy to the solution of the acute problems facing the common people. Through strictly democratic procedure the Farmer-Labor Party is successfully remedying many of our present evils.

Their greatest national malady is the profit-taking system of our economic overlords who comprise the owning class. Farmer-Laborites are seeking to change this set-up by collective and co-operative ownership of our means of production and similarly by the operation of our own political machine. This program, when fulfilled, will abolish capitalism and bring about a new social order. We can go on from there.

Meanwhile, everyone must help build the Farmer-Labor Party nationally!

Books Needed By Library

Behind the Spanish Barrieades, by John Langdon-Davies.

Biology and Human Behavior, by Mark Graubard.

American Labor Struggles, by Samuel Yellen.

Inside Europe, by John Gunther.

International Politics, by F. L. Schuman.

Germany Prepares for War, by E. Banse.

The Big Money, by John Dos Passos.