WILLIAMS SPEAKS AT
CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Asserts 'Peace and Good Will'
Are Impossible Under
Exploitation

Some fifty neighbors assembled with the
Commonwealth student body on Christ-
mas Eve to take part in a service based
upon the theme of “peace on earth, good
will toward men,” led by Claude Williams,
director of the college, and featuring a
“litany of labor.”

Overalled farmers with their wives and
children stood in the holly-decorated Com-
monwealth Sing Christmas carols and to hear
Williams denounce the forces which have
made peace on earth a grim jest and good
will among men a far-off aspiration.

“There is no peace on earth,” said Wil-
liams, “and there can be none, so long as
exploitation by force prevails. In Italy we
have seen the exploiters seize power and
draw the last drop of profit out of the peo-
ple, so that they are now squeezing the mid-
dle class dry to maintain themselves. In
Germany much the same thing is happen-
ing. In Spain, when the people elected
their own government by democratic methods
to end the exploitation of centuries, the
discredited rulers attempted to regain
their position by military force; they have
murdered millions of peace-loving people
and washed the country in blood to achieve
their ends. In China an autocratic power
is murdering other innocent millions for
the same purposes of economic exploita-
tion.

“There can be no peace on earth, no good
will among men, until the masses and mul-
titudes bring about peace and good will by
their own action. Here at Commonwealth
we are doing what we can, as part of a
broad movement among organized labor
and the churches, to make those tradition-
al words of hope a reality.”

The “litany of labor” consisted of a re-
sponsive reading by the leader and the au-
dience of biblical selections which pointed
toward the same ends which Williams em-
phasized in his talk.

Staff Members Join
Office Workers Union

A new union appeared on the campus
last week when several staff members
enrolled in the United Office and Profes-
sional Workers of America, a CIO affiliate.

The Commonwealth membership will
probably amount to some ten persons
when those eligible have signed up. Office,
publicity, and library workers are expected
to join. The college will pay the dues of
those who are on a maintenance basis, as it
does in the case of faculty members who
belong to the American Federation of
Teachers.

One of the youngest unions in the coun-
ty, the United Office and Professional
Workers of America is moving forward
vigorously on several fronts to bring the
millions of white collar workers into the
labor movement. Chief interest centers in
the campaigns being carried on among
clerical workers, insurance agents, and fi-
nancial employees. Printed monthly news-
papers are being issued for each of these
groups.

National attention has been drawn to
the drive among the insurance agents by a
recent article in a magazine describ-
ing the long hours, “stretch-out system,”
low pay, and hopeless prospects of these
workers. In New York two thousand em-
ployees marched around the office of the
four-billion-dollar Metropolitan Life Insur-
ance Company in a noon-hour mass picket
line as a demonstration of strength.

The UOPWA has joined with a number
of other white-collar unions to form the
Financial Employees Organizing Commit-
tee, which is now engaged in a determined
campaign to organize the traditionally
underpaid employees of banks and broker-
age houses. Encouragement has just been
given the FDIC in its demand for recog-
nition at the Bank of Yorktown, in New
York, by an opinion from Mrs. Elmore
M. Herrick, regional director of the Na-
tional Labor Relations Board, that “there
seems to be nothing in the National Labor
Relations Act which denies to bank em-
ployees the same rights accorded to other
employees.”

QUARTER ENDS; NEW
TERM BEGINS JAN. 6

Eleven Stay-Over Students to
be Nucleus for Winter
Period’s Work

Commonwealth’s first term under its
reorganized plan of operation came to
an end on December 23, with the next
quarter scheduled to begin after a two-
week intermission January 6.

Eleven students determined to remain
for at least one more quarter, a larger
percentage of carry-over than has been
customary in recent years. In addition to
these, Ruth Voithofer, who has been at-
tending the school on a student-teacher
basis, stayed on under full faculty status
as a teacher of Public Speaking.

Numerous applications have been re-
ceived for the winter term, but the exact
number of new students is still uncertain,
as all applicants are required to produce
evidence of serious interest in the la-
bor movement, as well as a physician’s cer-
tificate of good health, before being ad-
mitted.

Funds for ten new scholarships, in addi-
tion to those usually provided by friends
of the college, have just been made avail-
able by a grant from a foundation in New
York. The extra scholarships will be award-
ed to workers in Southern industry and
agriculture, on the basis of labor union rec-
ommendations.

Two new courses have been planned for
the winter quarter: one in Current Events,
to be taught by Winifred Chappell, and
one in Advanced Economics, under the lea-
dership of Henry Hack. The Current Events
class will involve discussion, analysis, re-
lationship, and possible effects of contem-
porary happenings in America and in the
world; the Advanced Economics course
will carry on the study of the economic
system begun last quarter by William
Buttrick’s class.

Courses in Union Methods, Labor His-
tory, Workers’ Dramatics, Elementary
Economics, Imperialism and Fascism, La-
bor Journalism, Public Speaking, Mimeo-

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Letters Indicate Importance of Role Commonwealth College Can Play in Furnishing Leadership for Southern Labor Movement

Qualified Persons Unable to Afford Cost of Labor Training

From Mineville, N. Y.

"If possible, I would like to enroll as a student in Commonwealth College, but financially I belong to the "have nots." Is there any scholarship that would make it possible for me to enroll?"

"I was born September 16, 1914, entered the Mineville Grammar School in September 1929 and was graduated in June 1929; entered the Mineville High School in September 1929 and was graduated magna cum laude in June 1931 and received my University of the State of New York diploma in January 1932."

"I have worked with a road construction gang for the summer months (1931 and 1935), in an iron ore smelter (1933), sports writer for a daily (1933-34) and as the associate editor of a liberal weekly (1934-35). We were, through civil suit, forced out of business. I worked in an iron ore separator until our union, possibly due to my mismanagement, was broken.

"Since I need must be self-supporting, I am unable to pay even a registration fee. What further formal education I may secure must be paid for with my own work. The present 'recession' in business bodes ill for my chance of saving."

"If it is possible for me to complete a course of study at Commonwealth College I plan to publish a newspaper (I suppose it will be called liberal, radical, etc.) designed to teach readers to think for themselves.

From Perrineville, N. J.

"It has long been my ambition to spend at least one quarter at your college, yet it has never been possible for me to do so. I was aiming at this January's quarter, but a serious lack of funds has again made it impossible. I live on a farm, and so the spring and summer quarters are out of the question, since they are the busiest time of the year. That leaves, as the earliest possible date, next September, the beginning of the fall quarter. I sincerely hope it will be possible for me to be with you then."

Leaders of agricultural unions in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma have asked that Commonwealth make available scholarships for competent members of their groups who require training in union methods and leadership.

Students Testify to Benefits Derived from Courses at School

From a letter written by Norman LeFever, member Butte(Mont.) Local No. 1, International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.

"... having had several years experience in my own union, I must say that I am getting out of Commonwealth what I expected: a better and broader knowledge of union methods generally, of workers' economics, of the fundamentals of labor journalism and general propaganda work, and of public speaking. These and other subjects taught here are intended to give to those workers who feel the limitations of their own knowledge an understanding of all phases of labor activity, in their broadest aspects, to supplement their own practical experience. The instruction is given by men who are practical unionists themselves, who have been up against the gun and know what it is all about, which is something that appeals to workers, who generally have an aversion to technical experts. What one gets out of Commonwealth is limited only by the amount of time and effort that one puts into his studies.

Coupled to this is the school's fieldwork, which is increasingly important. This work is designed especially for the needs of the South, the weakest link in Labor's chain. It is limited by lack of funds but is still a contribution of the first importance to progress, Commonwealth is a great factor in Labor's advance, particularly in the South."

From Rosalie Stinson, Frankfort, Ind.

"To this Hoosier from the prairies of Indiana, from the fertile farm lands with their bankrupt farmers, Commonwealth has come to mean a rich source of education, practical and theoretical approaches in labor and farm movements, and sound political economy.

"As an affiliate of both the United Automobile Workers and the Farmers' Union, I have been keenly conscious of the well-rounded approach that Commonwealth College presents. Students may come from any progressive movement, and through the inclusive curriculum may gain a comprehensive understanding of the background, present and future of the labor movement.

"To me Commonwealth College represents all that anyone can possibly seek in the way of farmer and labor education."

Workers Ask Organizational Aid; Tribute from Labor Paper

A sharecropper appeals for help from Florence, Alabama.

"My Reasons for writing you this letter is the tenant farmers here in Lauderdale County are unorganized and need organized very into a tenant Farmers' Union. Could you get an organizer across this way? Every one I talk with says we need to be organized. If you can get us an organizer out here please let me hear from you. We can meet at churches and school houses and organize Local Unions all over Lauderdale County.

"P.S. Answer."

From Hampton, Ark.

"We would like to have an organizer in our community to organize a union of WPA workers in our county. Please advise who and where we can get in touch with a good organizer to come at once and help us in the work."

From the Southwest Oil Worker, December 14, 1937.

"Deep in the seclusion of the hills near Meno some fifty-odd new-day pioneers are making a realistic, inspiring effort to help the laboring millions find and achieve a better life for themselves.

"Flying the twin banners of Commonwealth College and Organized Labor over their outpost, these half-a-hundred workers are living for one purpose; to bring the light of power-giving knowledge fully to bear on the problems that confront the workers of America and especially the workers of the South and Southwest.

"Commonwealth College has been reborn. It is manned by practical men who have made names for themselves in the labor movement. It is supervised by 21 (soon to be 24) members of the Commonwealth College Association, every one of which has made a significant contribution to organized labor. It is guided by one all-embracing aim—Service to Labor.

"It is the conviction of this writer that every labor group in the South, whether local union or central labor council, ought to be planning to send one or more young men or young women between the ages of sixteen and ninety to Commonwealth College. Selfish interest in improving the quality of their own leadership ought to motivate these organizations to invest fifty dollars in providing a term for the best labor education available in the United States for those who will be their leaders."
Williams Discusses Relationship Between Religion and Labor Movement in Closing Series of Lectures

A unique feature of the quarter just ended was a series of lectures given during the final week by Claude Williams, Commonwealth director, on the place of religion in the labor movement.

Recognizing the fact that many of the students were indifferent or even inimical to religion because they believed it substituted wish-dreams of a future world for positive action to better the present, Williams pointed out that such a devitalizing interpretation of the Bible is not the only one, and that religion, properly channeled, can become an economic social force. He backed his position with an impressive array of scriptural quotations condemning acquisitiveness, extolling the only possible outlet for such an expression of these aspirations, and prophesying the final week by Williams: "He who call Quote Scripture." 

"Moses was the first labor agitator," said Williams. "He organized a walkout of the bricklayers and led them out of Egypt to the land of Canaan, their own land, where each man could have his forty acres and a mule. All through the Old Testament you find the prophets crying out against the rich and selfish who have forgotten the Hebraic laws against monopolizing the fruits of the earth. And in the new Testament you discover Jesus driving money-changers from the temple, and championing the common people, Paul declaring that those people who do not work have no business eating. James denouncing the landlords who cheat their tenant farmers. The Bible has as many texts for organizational speeches as it has for sermons on other subjects."

One of Williams' lectures was devoted to a survey of the work that liberal churchmen and other religious leaders are doing in the service of labor. "These men," he commented, "know that the church has not properly fulfilled its function in giving voice to the aspirations of the people, and that the people have consequently relegated it to a minor position in their lives; now they are realizing that the labor movement is the most vital present-day expression of these aspirations, and they are coming to labor and saying, What can we do to help?" A number of publications issued by such liberal groups were passed out to illustrate the progressiveness of their thought.

Williams' own career is illustrative of the close relationship between the pulpit and the labor stratum. A few years ago he was a minister of a small Presbyterian church at Paris, Ark. In that position he came to know well the narrowness of horizon and the defeatism which the regimentation of capitalist society imposes. In the course of his successful endeavor to give the young people of the town some vision of a more abundant world he was led into organizational work among the miners. Finally ousted by reactionaries in his congregation - his case became hopeless when it was revealed that he had had a Negro to dinner - his path led him to fighting the battle of the unemploym in Fort Smith, where he was convicted of brawlaty and spent three weeks in jail, and to organizing for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, in the course of which he was beaten and nearly lynched. Eventually he crystallized his various pursuits into a program of workers' education and founded the New Era School of Social Action and Prophectic Religion in Little Rock, under the auspices of the Religion and Labor Foundation. This project combined extension and resident classes for both Negro and white workers with a library and a workers' church. Despite an eviction and constant financial difficulties, he continued the school until last fall, when he assumed the directorship of Commonwealth and carried over the major part of its program in the form of field activities for the college.

COOPERATIVES TAKEN AS SUBJECT OF DEBATE

Memihns of Ruth Voithofer's class in Public Speaking met in debate December 14 on the question, "Resolved: that the Cooperative Movement can bring about Socialism without recourse to the Class Struggle."

Guy Knebel and Edith Rubin upheld the affirmative side in the discussion, while David Venitsky and Steve Dusak set forth the arguments for the negative.

An audience decision on effectiveness of presentation favored the negative representatives.

PRINTED AT COMMONWEALTH BY STUDENT AND TEACHER LABOR

Published twice a month at Monc, Arkansas, by Commonwealth College. Subscriptions, one dollar a year. Entered as second class matter January 30, 1926, at the postoffice at Monc, Arkansas, under the act of August 24, 1912.

Labor Unity Meeting Enacted by Students

Rheumatic abounded, points of order scintillated, and the best-known names in the American labor movement were heard as a "CIO-AFL Unity Conference" progressed through three extended sessions at Commonwealth on December 17 and 18.

The "conference" was staged by the members of Horace Bryan's class in Union Methods and Ruth Voithofer's class in Public Speaking for the purpose of affording the students training in parliamentary procedure and at the same time giving them a practical acquaintance with the present situation in the labor movement.

"Reid Robinson," impersonated by Norman LeFever, was chairman of the conference; "John P. Frey," played by Peter Wartiainen, was vice-chairman; and "Homer Martin," enacted by Rosalie Stinson, was secretary. Dave Shane, with heavily pencilled eyebrows, took the part of John Lewis, and William Buttrick portrayed William Green.

A unity resolution outlining in some detail plans for a return of the Committee for Industrial Organization into the American Federation of Labor was offered by Bryan, as "Ben Gold," and was adopted by the conference. Resolutions on unemployment, on wage-and-hour legislation, on a federal housing program, on political action, on national workmen's compensation laws, and on the Japanese boycott were also adopted.

The conference was planned by Bryan, Ruth Voithofer, Gertrude Lipschitz, Rosalie Stinson, and Norman LeFever.

PLAYS CONTRIBUTED IN RESPONSE TO APPEAL

Plays and skits have been coming in to the Commonwealth library in considerable number as a result of the FORTNIGHTLY'S appeal last October for such material, according to Lee Hays, dramatics director for the college.

Over two hundred items are now included in the dramatics library, all of which have been bound and catalogued. The cataloguing for each item comprises a brief outline of the material together with a critical judgement of its value and possible use.

Among the contributions to come in during the quarter was the complete collection of plays published by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, sent by Mark Starr, educational director of the organization. Hays plans the continued enlargement of the library, and will welcome any further donations.
Volume Published By Commonwealth Poet

A volume of verse was issued last week by Ike Dworan, nineteen-year-old Commonwealth poet, to be sold on the campus and elsewhere, the proceeds going to the Spanish Loyalists.

The book, entitled, "What Say What," contains ten poems varying in content from casual lyrics and recordings of momentary impressions to character sketches of some subtlety and impact.

Mimeographed on ordinary paper and stapled, the cost of production for the volume was kept so low that it is being sold for five cents a copy—indeed, it is subtitled "Ten Poems for a Dime." Plans are under consideration for issuing similar books from time to time at the college, so that the work of students and other persons may be made known to the public at a nominal cost.

"What Say What" is dedicated "to the American fighting for Spanish Democracy."

[NEW TERM from page one]

graph Technique, and Typing will again be offered, as well as various short special sessions on subjects of general interest, such as the discussions on Cooperatives carried on under Peter Warratnmen during the fall quarter.

A special school for leaders in the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union is scheduled at Little Rock in March. Members of the executive board, organizers, county officials, and local officers will participate in round-table discussions and hear talks by men experienced in agricultural organization. It is expected that a number of faculty members and students will come down to Little Rock for the occasion. Various other extension projects are also contemplated, but final plans have not yet been made.

Books Needed By Library

Hardy, Jack, The First American Revolution.

Rochester, Anna, Rulers of America.

Bloch, Labor Agreements in Coal Mines.

Kroll, Harry, I Was a Sharecropper.

Berman, Edward, Labor and the Sherman Act.

Van Kleek, Mary, Mines and Management.

Frankfurter and Greene, The Labor Injunction.

M. W. Fodor, Plot and Counter-plot in Central Europe.

Mitchell, John, Organized Labor.

Lundburg, Ferdinand, America’s Sixty Families.

Roy, Andrew, History of Coal Miners of the United States.

The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism by Robert A. Brady; Viking Press; $3.00.

Words have an unfortunate habit of becoming worn with use. When bright and fresh, they attract notice; their users stop and look at them as they would a new dime, perhaps even think about them. But as the shine wearing off their meaning comes to be taken for granted, given an exchange value of a few set phrases; an old dime is worth ten cents, no more.

The word Fascism has suffered the wear and tear that comes with usage. When we think of it we think of war, of race persecution, of a broken labor movement—phrases that can mean much or little. But we need to be reminded freshly and terribly of what Fascism in action really means; and for that reason Professor Brady’s look ought to be mandatory reading for everyone in the labor movement.

The essence of Fascism is the crushing out of every impulse and attribute that gives dignity to the individual human being. The people are a herd of morons; give them a little pap about national honor and race glory, scare them by murdering a few thousand agitators, and they will accept regimentation, hunger, and death with the utmost docility—that is the premise upon which Fascism operates. No wonder German art and letters have vanished; no wonder German science has fled the country! No form of culture can survive under the greatest mass humiliation in the history of mankind.

Professor Brady’s book is not a political polemic, but a careful, painstaking analysis of the process whereby German capitalism has established a military discipline over the economic, social, and spiritual life of the nation. None the less he is fully aware of the implications of his study; not the least valuable element of his work is the constant parallel he draws between the methods of the Fascist rulers and those of American big-business publicity men and advertising experts. And his climax is a clarion call to the American worker:

"The hope of the people of the United States is to be found, not in giving free reign to monopoly-oriented and Fascist-inclined capitalism, but in turning back its fields, factories and workshops to those who fought its war of freedom against a tyrannical power, and who built, with their muscles and brains, all the real wealth and all that is in America which deserves the name of culture. But it will not come to them as a gift: they must learn that the only solution to recovery of their heritage lies within themselves."

--Jean Winkler

The Economics of Cooperative Marketing by Henry H. Bakken and Marvin A. Schaars; McGraw-Hill; $4.00.

New institutions inevitably arise when an established order of society outwears its usefulness, and as the period of transition usually is accompanied by a certain amount of chaos, along with an absence of state authority, new institutions are likely to assume the characteristics of a democratic self-help movement. So society witnesses the rise of large scale cooperative production and distribution based on the heels of the industrial revolution.

This book is a successful objective study of the cooperative marketing movement, of which purchasing and selling are the two phases. A historical survey of the waves of cooperative enthusiasm and of the parts played by the Granges, Farmers’ Alliance, Equity, Farm Bureaus and Farmers’ Unions, together with a study of cooperative marketing in other lands, completes a comprehensive picture of the movement.

Education is recognized as being a vital factor. Special mention is made of the folk highschools of Denmark set up by Bishop Granville, which taught courses of a cultural character—history, economics and political science.

In such industrial countries as England emphasis has been placed on the consumers’ end of marketing, while agrarian countries such as Russia, Denmark and the United States have led in farmers’ marketing cooperatives. Students of the southern cotton regions may find in the study of agricultural credit the ideas that hold the germ of the future developments to emancipate the sharecropper.

Principles of purchasing cooperatives and marketing associations, legal aspects, limitations and possible future in light of present conditions are taken up.

The authors do not consider the cooperative movement likely to become an alternative to the profit system. In their own words, "two systems of distribution, private and cooperative, will continue to compete with one another, each acting as a check and balance upon the other, and both striving for greater efficiency in the battle of competition."

--Peter Warratnmen, Jr.