

INDUSTRY

Brookwood's Summer Institutes, 1927

By HELEN G. NORTON

FOR the third successive summer, Brookwood Labor College at Katonah, N. Y., has cooperated with organized labor in a series of educational conferences for trade union groups. In 1925 there was a Railroad Institute, followed by a General Labor Institute. In 1926, a Textile Institute, a Giant Power Institute sponsored by the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and a second Railroad Institute.

Three institutes were held this summer—a Textile Institute (July 18-23), Women's Auxiliary Institute (July 25-30), and a General Labor Institute (August 1-13), the first week of which was devoted to problems of building trades unions and the second to the railroad and metal trades.

Classes were held morning and evening, varied by lectures by economists and labor leaders, and the afternoons were left free for recreation. Class study, conducted by Arthur W. Calhoun, director of studies at Brookwood, was based on sets of prepared questions, and the discussion was later summarized and mimeographed for permanent record.

Attention at the General Labor Institute centered around the organization of unorganized workers, particularly in the steel and automobile industries; modification of craft unionism to cope with present industrial methods; company unionism; unemployment; workers' education; and legislative and political activities of labor.

If the unorganized workers are to be brought into the ranks of trade unionism—and this, in the minds of the institute members, is imperative—then a thorough educational campaign is necessary in two fields as a preliminary. The workers themselves must be convinced of the desirability of unionism and prepared for their share in the group responsibility. On the other hand, the present membership of the trade unions must be aroused from the apathetic attitude of the past to the necessity of having all workers organized, whether or not their own particular unions receive an increased per capita tax therefrom.

Craft unionism, which served so admirably in the days when a machinist was a real journeyman, and not merely a turner of nuts or a presser of levers, will have to be modified, the institute decided, to allow the organization of all workers in an industry or a plant into the same union with provisions for craft differentiation.

New methods of organizing are necessary to meet the new situation—methods which take account of the psychology of modern workers (not forgetting women), and the value of mass appeals and publicity. Trade unions may well take a page from the company unions in providing for the social and recreational life of the family as well as for wages and working conditions of the union member.

The conference felt that the injunction, by which judges assume law-making functions, must be fought on all fronts—by legislative pressure to curtail its abuses, by direct re-

sistance to particular injunctions, or by using the injunction as a weapon in the hands of labor.

Organized labor can avail itself of opportunities for legislative and political influence, the institute members decided. Commenting on this aspect of the situation, Mr. Calhoun said: "It is becoming more and more impossible to solve the problems of any industry by themselves, and more and more necessary to have a program of general labor solidarity reaching out even into the field of political program for the control of the whole industrial system by the workers."

Trade unions represented at the General Labor Institute included the electrical workers, lithographers, machinists, federal employes, teachers, railway clerks, and engineers.

The Textile Institute was of significance chiefly as an effort of a group of workers to study seriously and objectively their industry from the standpoint of management. The fifty-two members of the United Textile Workers who came to Brookwood for the week were representatives of all branches of the industry, including sheeting, woolens, cottons, hosiery, silks, thread, and loom fixing. Besides the entire executive council of the union there were eight organizers and thirty-five rank-and-file members, representing nineteen industrial centers from states as widely separated as Maine and Wisconsin.

Workers under the present highly mechanized and complex industrial system cannot hope to get anywhere merely by making arbitrary demands and fighting blindly for them, the group agreed. They must have a knowledge of their industry and of general economic conditions in order to meet the employer on his own ground. With this in mind, the members of the Textile Institute spent two sessions a day studying such problems as over-development, capitalization, accounting methods, labor's responsibility in problems of management, and the tariff question.

Over-development, the most serious weakness of the industry, has resulted in large measure from uncontrolled competition, and the workers agreed that some sort of unification of control was desirable to prevent wasteful duplication, to determine the yardage needed of different materials, to distribute production, and to eliminate obsolete machinery and methods. While such unification might result disastrously for the workers, on the other hand it might mean a better opportunity for them if they saw to it that union organization kept pace with organization of the industry, and secured the right of the workers to function in management.

EXPERT accountants might well be employed by labor unions, it was agreed, to check up on accounting practices of employers and make sure that before the workers' share of the income was curtailed on the plea of paying dividends, actual profits had not been hocus-focused into stock

dividends or otherwise disguised, diverted or doctored.

Guarantees for the workers such as sickness- and unemployment-insurance are counterparts of the employers' reserve funds, the institute pointed out, and as such constitute a legitimate charge against the industry and should be fought for.

Weaknesses in present-day management which were pointed out included absentee ownership, paternalism, shortsighted dividend policies, inefficiency of traditional methods of management and machinery, high labor turnover, and speeding up processes which wear the workers out too soon.

Upon the idea of a high protective tariff the textile workers looked askance, pointing out that "infant industries" should by this time have reached years of discretion. They had no fancy, however, for free trade which would mean lowering the American standard of living to the level of the under-paid workers in certain other countries.

The ideal tariff, they decided after much discussion, would be one low enough to eliminate inefficient manufacturers in this country and at the same time high enough to penalize countries whose low labor costs involve exploitation of their workers.

The thirty women who attended the Women's Auxiliary Institute were wives of machinists in railway shops, automobile factories and shipyards, and of lithographers, carpenters, and postal clerks. Auxiliaries in Cleveland, Chicago, Newport News and Beverly (Virginia), Montreal, Ontario and New Brunswick, New York, New Jersey, Washington, and Detroit sent delegates. The institute was sponsored jointly by the Machinists' Auxiliary and Brookwood.

Women's place in the labor movement was discussed from two viewpoints—the relation and responsibility of the wife of the trade unionist, and the position of the working woman.

The whining wife who resents her husband's interest in labor affairs and is reluctant to make family sacrifices for the sake of the movement, and the domineering man who snubs his wife when she tries to take an intelligent interest in labor questions, and belittles feminine assistance were both severely scored.

Company unionism, women in industry, the purchasing

power of wages, state and national labor legislation, local labor conditions, and the public school system were some of the subjects suggested for local study groups. Local federations of auxiliaries were proposed, and the women were urged to present the labor viewpoint in their church and club organizations.

Municipal and cooperative housing schemes both in this country and abroad were studied for possible solutions of the housing problem for the working class family. The increasing use of electricity in the home and the consequent concern of housewives in the elimination of exorbitant rates were discussed. The case of one woman present who paid 3½ cents per kilowatt hour in Ontario and cooked and washed and ironed by electricity furnished convincing argument for government control of power sources for electric generation.

Four million of the eight and a half million women working in industry today are eligible for membership in trade unions already organized and affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, according to Mary Anderson, head of the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor, who spoke at the institute:

The organization of women workers is just a part of the greater problem of organizing the unorganized. The unorganized are largely the unskilled, and most women workers are on unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. . . . True, women are hard to organize—at any rate they require a different technique of organization—but part of the blame must be borne by the men of the labor movement who at heart have been reluctant to have them organized, at least into their own unions. Until this vast group of working women do find a place in the ranks of organized labor, however, they will continue to work long hours for low wages and to drag the whole scale of payment down.

Such gatherings of trade unionists for study and discussion of industrial questions are in a very real sense "workers' education." The interest of those who attend the institutes, their thoughtfulness in discussion, their high resolve to "learn more and do more," give hope that American labor is increasingly ready to prepare itself, consciously and directly, to play its part in solving the problems of modern industry.

A New School in the Old South

By LOIS MACDONALD

THE Southern Summer School for Women Workers in Industry, which ended its first session September 2, is the first undertaking of its kind in the South. The school is sponsored by an independent committee of Southerners who are interested in workers' education. The committee secured part of the equipment of Sweet Briar College, Virginia, for the session, but the administration and the policies of the school rest with the committee itself, no member of which has any connection with the college.

The financial support came from two main sources. The committee secured a subsidy from the American Fund for Public Service on condition that a like amount be raised in the southern communities from which the students came. A scholarship of \$125 was provided for each student. An analysis of the sources of the money which was raised locally shows that in places where it had any strength

at all organized labor supported the project generously.

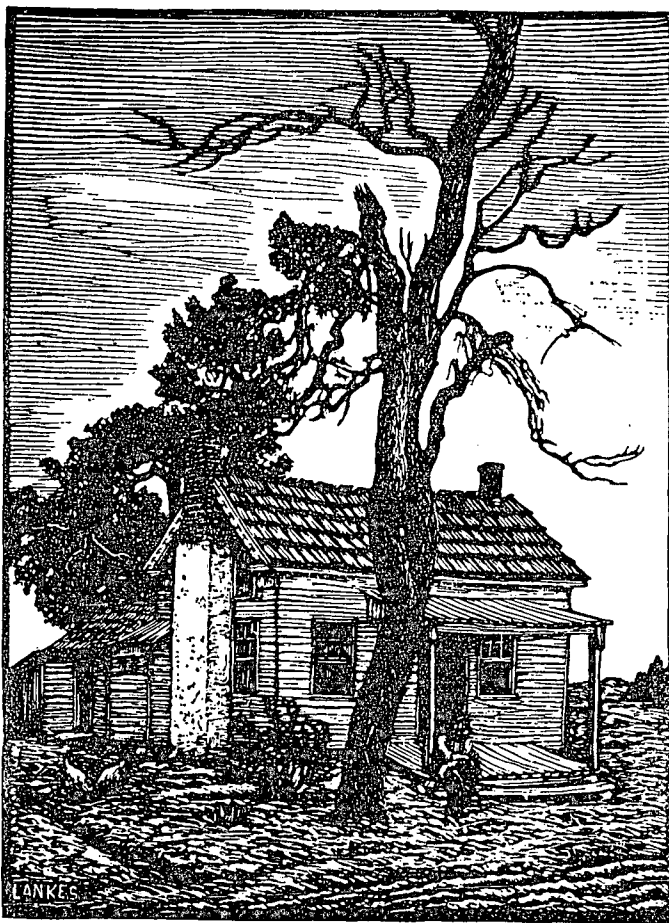
The school hopes to accomplish two general aims. It wants to give the individual student resources for a greater enjoyment of life. It goes further, however, and recognizes that means of enjoying personal life are directly affected by the kind of economic advantage or disadvantage which industrial workers as a group are able to secure for themselves. So in addition to a purely cultural emphasis, the school encourages students to forge for themselves, by means of study and discussion of their common problems, actual tools by which, after they "recognize their part and responsibility as industrial workers", they may be able to meet these problems intelligently and fearlessly. The work of the school fell in three main divisions: economics, English and physical education.

There were twenty-five students enrolled in this first session. To be admitted all of them had to be "working

with the tools of their trade." They came from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee—the rapidly growing manufacturing states of the South. The one exception was a student from Missouri. The majority were garment workers, textile workers or tobacco workers—the industries typical of these states.

Only seven girls were members of trade unions, one of the bindery workers' union, the others of the United Garment Workers. Their previous schooling ranged from the fourth grade to the third year in high school. Three of them started to work when they were thirteen years old, eight at fourteen and the others from fifteen to twenty. All had at least two years of industrial experience.

It goes without saying that the students were a self-directing body. They decided all matters relating to the conduct of the school. They operated their own co-operative store. A committee of them spent much time outlining various ways in which they might "carry on" when they returned to their work in a city or in a cotton mill village. A group interested in dramatics produced for the rest of the school one of the Carolina Folk Plays, a tragedy of a tenant farmer's family. Another group, girls from cotton mill villages, wrote a sketch dealing with life in the villages.



Woodcut by J. J. Lankes

In Old Virginia

South continues to evolve her manufacturing interests. If the experience of the school is to mean anything it will be seen in the manner in which the students are able to transmit something of their new vision to their groups at home. The school is an indication of a stirring and an awakening, and that is its real significance.

On the surface this school is simply another experiment in trying to prepare workers to deal intelligently with their problems. In the light of the conditions surrounding workers in the South, however, it does have peculiar significance. The South is undergoing a very rapid transformation, from agricultural interest to manufacturing. The workers are very close to the land. The fathers of twenty-three of the twenty-five students have been farmers at some time. This means that they are not very conscious of any division of interest with their employers. They are beginning, however, to resent their low industrial standards—their long hours, their low wages, their lack of status. The students considered their problems as workers in the midst of an industrial revolution against the background of a general study of the history of industry. They began to prepare for changes which would come to the workers as the

Cooperative Credit

By MILDRED JOHN

IN the Metropolitan (Boston) District of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, the work of two thrift agencies has been combined, and the peculiar value resulting from this "dovetailing" must be of interest to those who employ large groups and do not favor paternalism too strongly.

A credit union started in 1917 by seven employes has been so successful that it now has a membership of over 6,000 of the 10,000 people employed by the company in Boston. Its original capital was \$3.75; today it is nearly a million (see *The Survey*, Feb. 15, 1925, p. 567). A credit union has been defined as a cooperative society, organized within a specific group, for the purpose of promoting thrift and creating credit resources at a legitimate rate of interest. It serves as a bank where small sums may be saved and borrowed to meet emergency needs. Extraordinary expenses such as medical bills, coal, and taxes are

important purposes for which people with small incomes are obliged to borrow.

But a credit union cannot loan large sums or tie up its money permanently; it does not afford a way whereby members can purchase homes easily, or even save enough to buy them, since by law the amount that can be accumulated is limited. A year and a half ago, because of the demand on the part of credit union members and at the suggestion of the company, a cooperative bank (commonly known as a building and loan association) was instituted to help the employes obtain homes. The two agencies are housed in the same offices; they serve the same general group of people; and nine-tenths of the shareholders in the cooperative bank are members of the credit union. The first eighteen months' business has demonstrated that these agencies supplement rather than compete with each other.

Charles F. Donahoe, president of both the credit union.

and the cooperative bank; has outlined some of the advantages of combining these two agencies in the service of a large group of employees: "In the first place, the busy season for the cooperative bank comes when there are comparatively few demands for loans from credit union members. Thus, in February, 1926, the credit union did the largest business of the year, while in the cooperative bank there were no demands for real estate loans." In December and January the cooperative bank did 23 per cent of its business for the year, while the credit union did only 7 per cent; likewise in the months of August, September, and October, 1926, the cooperative bank approved 6 per cent of its year's loans, while the credit union did 19 per cent of the year's business. In the fall months people want money for taxes, coal and winter clothing, which they can secure from the credit union; in the spring they are able and willing to begin to assume the financial responsibility of buying a home and go to the cooperative bank for help. When demands on the bank are unusually heavy, the credit union can take first mortgages until such time as the cooperative bank has funds to assume them. This has two advantages, the borrowers do not have to wait for their money which might mean losing the house they want, and the credit union is drawing better interest on its surplus than can be secured at the bank. Cooperation between the two results in a continuous supply of ready money.

Men are enabled to capitalize their character for the purchase of homes. For instance, a man recently bought a home worth \$8,000. The cooperative bank took a \$5,000 first mortgage, and the credit union assumed a \$2,000 second mortgage for which the charge was 7 per cent instead of 12 per cent interest and 12 per cent commission commonly demanded by "second mortgage loan sharks." This man decreases his principal and interest by stipulated weekly payments to both agencies, and will in the course of time own his home clear of indebtedness. Sometimes, however, a man is unable to pay interest and decrease his principal on both mortgages at the same time, and so is advised to have a savings bank take the first mortgage and the credit union the second. When the second is paid off, the first is transferred from the savings bank, where it paid interest only, to the cooperative bank where payments cover both interest and reduction of principal. There are innumerable other ways of working out the problem to meet the needs of the individual, and with two agencies this can nearly always be accomplished.

This combination provides two important services for a large group of people whose lack of collateral makes it impossible for them to obtain credit at the banks; and, perhaps best of all, it proves that by combining their small savings a group of wage-earners can meet successfully emergency and family needs.



BAD WORKING CONDITIONS, living conditions below "the minimum requirements of decent existence," overwork and underpay are the rule, not the exception, in the Delaware vegetable canneries according to the report of a recent study made by the Women's Bureau, United States Department of Labor (Bulletin of the Women's Bureau No. 62, Government Printing Office). The work, mostly tomato canning, is highly seasonal, and most of it is done by migratory women and child workers. One-third of the workers interviewed as a

basis for this study reported a work week in excess of 55 hours, and some of them had worked between 70 and 80 hours. Regardless of the time worked, weekly earnings ranged from less than \$1 received by 12 women to \$28 received by one. Individual payroll data of 1,000 women in 24 canneries showed the median of the week's earnings to be between \$9 and \$10 for white women and between \$5 and \$6 for Negroes. Descriptions of the camps and of the working sheds picture dampness, dirt and overcrowding as the rule. Answering the contention of cannery owners that the class of labor employed would not appreciate or care for better provisions were these made, the report states that "California has very large cannery interests, but hours of work have been regulated, not only to the protection of the workers but to the advantage of the owners in the amount and grade of the resulting work; and in the questions of seating and other vital matters much has been done to bring the industry up to the standards set for non-seasonal industries. It was also found in Delaware itself that where cannery owners had provided clean, comfortable camps the average care given them by the workers was entirely satisfactory."

ONE OUTSTANDING feature of the recent biennial convention of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Detroit was the establishment of a pension fund. Under this plan, according to the special correspondent of Labor, "Any member over 65 who has been in good standing with the Brotherhood for 20 continuous years may secure a pension of \$40 a month. The only restriction is that, while drawing the pension, he must not perform the work of an electrician." The convention also drew up plans for complete organization of electrical workers in the radio industry and on public utilities.

THE Prospect Union Association of Cambridge announces a revised edition of its booklet, *Educational Opportunities of Greater Boston*, in which are listed about twenty-four hundred courses available to workers of the community. Charles A. Gates, director of the Prospect Union Educational Exchange, states that "The schools included have been carefully selected, only those giving evidence of good teaching ability and general reliability being listed." Prospect Union also offers vocational counseling and educational guidance to men and women, for which no fees are charged. Copies of the booklet have been placed in every public library in Massachusetts, and a limited number are available for free distribution from the Educational Exchange, 760 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge.

THE EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE of the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, reporting to the Executive Board, outlines a broad plan of workers' education. The report states emphatically that "any scheme that may be carried out . . . should not be for the purpose of making more paper makers but to improve the men who now have the practical knowledge of their work." The committee urges that each local union set up "a course of class studies in the different communities using the text-books compiled by the technical sections of the Pulp and Paper Manufacturers' Association and supplemental additional texts where necessary." The report points out that "the resolution clearly does not intend . . . with the teaching of industrial science or paper making technique to place in the background the value of historical facts of the struggles of the workers to improve their economic status and to secure social justice. . . . A curriculum including economics, labor history, sociology, English, psychology, journalism, trade union organization and finance and labor problems will keep us lined up with ideals of social justice." However, the resolution declares that "technical education is positively necessary to enable us to fit our movement into a higher order of economic and industrial development."

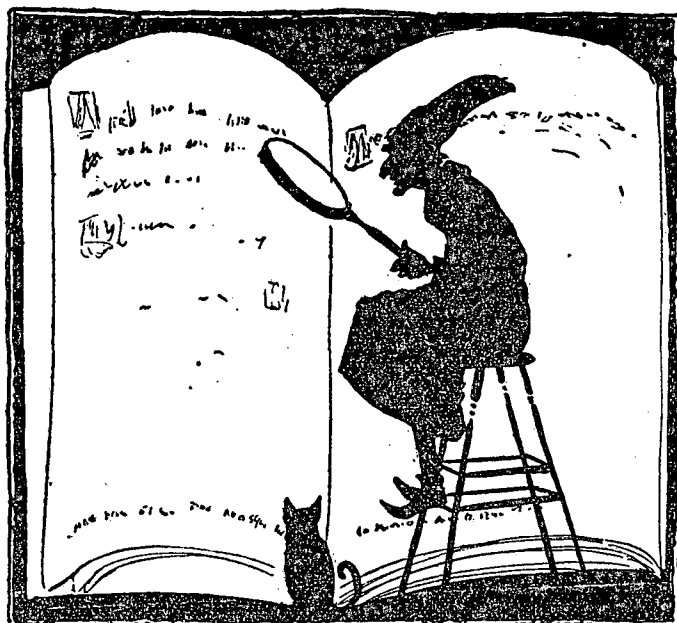
Books in Our Alcove Hanging

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by E. Roy Calvert. G. P. Putnam's Sons. 204 pp. Price \$2.00 postpaid of *The Survey*.

THIS little book is written with the "avowed object of presenting the case against capital punishment." It is hardly a "scientific" book: it might not satisfy the modern social investigator, it would be judged to have too much text and too few tables. But then, the social investigator does not need to be satisfied, and the material for many tables is not here available; statistics in this field are rare and often misleading. But there is a wider appeal.

This book reaches out to, and has indeed reached, a public that needs information. Its arguments are briefly these: The failure of capital punishment to protect society; its failure as a deterrent; its obstruction of convictions; the fallibility of court processes; and, finally, its ethical considerations. It is not a difficult task, this of the author's. There are, I suppose, no arguments for capital punishment that have not long ago been shot into ribbons. Capital punishment, it would seem, has only this in its favor, that it is psychologically pleasing to the primitive. But still it is supported by many. It is supported by three classes, by those who are sadistically inclined, by those who believe in the law's divinity, and by those who have not yet given any thought to the matter.

But this last group, this normal group, the important general public, is also not unwilling to withdraw its support. It has, if it only knew it, already outgrown the idea of the death penalty—as it learns for itself whenever it is put to the test of personal decision. Juries will not kill—dangerous men are set free if there is no alternative—and the law fails. So long ago as in 1830, as cited by the author, a petition of over one thousand bankers was laid before the House of Commons begging for the abolition of the death penalty for forgery, "earnestly praying that your honourable House will not withhold from them that protection to their property which they could derive from a more lenient law." So, too, when a theft of forty shillings brought hanging, juries would find men guilty of stealing only thirty-nine. And then, in 1827, when the capital indictment was raised to five pounds, the juries raised their appreciation of guilt to four pounds nineteen. That a jury might act differently in a matter of murder is of course not unlikely, but then this possibility is offset by the fact that the deterrent effect of the penalty is less in murder. Truly, in no crime is the possible punishment so little considered. Men kill to cover theft, to remove troublesome witnesses; and especially is



Courtesy of The Macmillan Company

this true in our own country, where killing has become almost casual, a mere detail in the carrying on of a profession. However, in England, where as Calvert reports, murders for robbery are rare, nearly one-half of all their capital crimes being crimes of sexual passion, again the penalty proves to be a matter of indifference—love lust, hatred and jealousy are always more potent.

Capital punishment is now known to be one of the errors of social experiment, born of a primitive, non-social instinct, and maintained by this same instinct, imperfectly rationalized. But is this law so unalterable that it cannot be changed? Is the law superior to reason? Are not our statutes but man-made affairs, and must we forever continue our failures? Consider: the law itself is capable of great wrong, may be responsible for much crime. When it exercises brutality and un-reason, it has ceased to function as a social measure, it invites then only our contempt or our fear—that which should be our main social servant becomes a menace. Again, too, when a small group can defy an appeal from the world's best people, as has been recently demonstrated to be possible, and can bring death to two men, under the law, then something is wrong, and it is especially wrong because it is under the law. Surely, such law must be changed! And this book should help change it. May Mr. Calvert have as many readers in this country as he already has abroad: two printings, two editions rather, this year—that is his present accomplishment!

CHARLES PLATT

President, National Probation Association

Uncle Sam's Mate

AMERICAN MEDICINE AND THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH, by H. H. Moore. D. Appleton and Company. 648 pages. Price \$5.00 postpaid of *The Survey*.

AGAIN the constructive critical layman in the medical mess. It was Lawyer Chadwick who startled England almost a hundred years ago into a national health policy and created a wealth which led the world in economic power to our present generation. It was Layman Lemuel Shattuck who told Massachusetts why her house must be put in order and how to do it if the commonwealth were to survive and justify its name. Here comes