

The Commonwealth College Collection

Papers, 1932

1 folder

Accession Number 1364  
L. C. Number MS

The papers of Commonwealth College were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs in June of 1988 by Margaret Chaplin, a librarian at the University of Illinois, and were opened for research in August of 1990.

Commonwealth College was organized in 1923 and eventually established its quarters in Mena, Arkansas. Its aim was to provide training for young people to work in the labor movement. It was also an experiment in educational self-support, educational democracy, and cooperative living. During its tenure, it was subject to the pulls and tugs of left-wing ideology, disagreement as to the appropriate curriculum and activities for a labor education school, and financial problems. It closed its doors in 1940.

The papers of Commonwealth College consist of a manuscript entitled "The Commonwealth College Strike Story," a report covering events in 1932 at the college when some students were agitating for more representation in the Commonwealth College Association, a body consisting of faculty, staff, and some students, which was responsible for formulating policies for the college. In December of 1932, the Commonwealth College Association suspended several leaders of the protesting students. The protesters elected a "strike" committee, members of which were subsequently arrested by the college administration for trespassing. Shortly after, members of the Strike Committee and twenty-eight other students left the college.

A copy of a master's thesis by William, H. Coff entitled "Commonwealth College: A History," is in the Raymond and Charlotte Moskowitz Collection, which is in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. Additional material related to Commonwealth College is in the Claude Williams Collection, also in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs.