they are even taught the essential facts of the development of the labor movement.

Finally the Southern School conducts schools of government for the workers by taking the leaders among them on field trips to Washington, D. C. Here they have a chance to see Congress in action. They take seats in the senate and house galleries, hold conferences with members of Congress, and attend committee hearings. By such methods the workers are made to see the close relationship between their personal welfare and the action of the lawmakers.

Serve All Unions And All People

Though dealing chiefly with the workers in the labor unions, the Southern School makes no distinction between the unions. They serve the unions of the C. I. O. and also of the A. F. of L. And happily their services are welcomed as much by management as by labor.

Making no distinction as to union membership they likewise make no distinction in their services on grounds of race. Indeed the five persons constituting the staff of the Southern School practice democracy on a scale hardly equalled by any other group of their kind.

Backing these instructors and full time employees is an executive board of twenty-four members and an advisory committee of the same number. Together they perform a most important service for the betterment of the laboring masses and the redemption of the South. I write about them with the hope that all citizens may become better acquainted with them. They are mighty fine.

The Southern School for Workers

by

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Teachers of The Laboring Masses

Of all the agencies now operating to educate the laboring class of people, one of the most effective is the Southern School for Workers of Richmond, Virginia with headquarters at 14 North Ninth Street. The Southern School is a new kind of school in that the instructors do no teaching whatever at this address, but move about from community to community wherever their services are most needed. On the staff of “workers” of the Southern School for Workers are Joan Farrell, Rodney Fisher, Bernice Cousins, Helen Estes Baker, and Brownie Lee Jones, director. Casting their lot entirely with industrial and agricultural workers—that neglected group who received little or no schooling in early life—this band of four women and one man, four white and one colored, offer a challenge to the practices of the large body of teachers in our public schools and colleges. They offer a challenge because their activity calls for a spirit of adventure and self-sacrifice such as the average public school teacher is not called upon to exhibit. These five persons make their own way; all other teachers have the way already made for them.

There is an old expression which says that one half the people of a country know not the condition of the other half. In the field of education most teachers know only the condition of the privileged upper half; those of the Southern School for Workers know also the condition of the unprivileged lower half. From daily experience they know the lot of the laboring masses far better than the host of public school teachers who know them only by reading about them.

Sponsor a Variety of Activities

To the dishonor of the Southland fully one-fifth of its adults are unable to read and write. Fortunately, some of the states of the region have lately appropriated funds to remedy this situation, but many communities still are without adult classes because no person in the area has interviewed the illiterate adults in order that they might be enrolled in classes. It is into this gap that the staff of teachers in the Southern School have stepped. Proceeding from house to house, frequently in the slum section, they have persuaded men and women in sufficient number to warrant school superintendents to begin night classes for them. It was under these conditions that Mrs. Baker brought together a class of 225 at Danville, Virginia to be taught by the regular corps of day school teachers.

This is only one function of the Southern School for Workers. Another is to go into any area where workers are on strike and create a situation where their time may be spent profitably. They entertain the strikers with moving pictures; interview ministers and other leaders in their behalf; organize picket and relief lines for them; and in various ways keep them from getting into mischief.

Still another important function is to tie the School up with any citizenship movement with which workers are concerned. For example, in the strenuous task of getting people to pay the poll tax, register, and vote, these five aggressive teachers enter with a vim. They also conduct leadership schools for the workers whereby they learn something about the provisions of their contracts. Going still further,