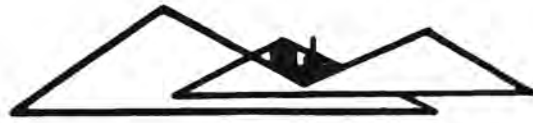


NEWS

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LETTER

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE

Loyal Jones • Thomas Parrish, Co-Editors

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Coming Up

This year, Berea College's renowned Workshop in Appalachian Studies will be offered in a new arrangement. The courses are to be consecutive rather than concurrent. The course in The History and Culture of Appalachia is to be given June 15-July 3, with the participation of such old hands as Richard B. Drake and Cratis Williams. Immediately following will be Appalachian Literature and the Arts (July 6-24); on hand will be veterans like Wilma Dykeman and Jim Wayne Miller. This summer there will be no one-week short course. For full particulars, write to the Appalachian Center at the address on the outside of this NEWSLETTER.

We'll slip in a reminder here about the Conference on Private Efforts in Appalachia, to be held in Berea June 18-19 under the joint sponsorship of Berea College and the Appalachian Fund.

Writers of all kinds can be looking forward to the West Virginia Writers' Conference at Cedar Lakes (Ripley), W.Va., June 19-21. Featured on the program will be James David Barber (*The Presidential Character*), Muriel Dressler (*Appalachia, My Land*) and Rose Adkins (*Writers' Digest*). The whole thing looks like a bargain (only about \$35 total cost); you can get the details from Emil Pauley, 4651 Victoria Road, Charleston, W.Va. 25313.

Another writerish gathering that ends just as the West Virginia conference is beginning is the Highland Summer Conference at Radford University, Radford, Va. 24142. In session June 8-19, it offers three two-week workshops in fiction writing, poetry writing and folklore/literature. It's a class operation, we are assured, since past leaders have been eminences like Cratis Williams, Jim Wayne Miller and Dara Wier. Write to Parks Lanier, Box 5917, RU Station, Radford, Va. 24142.

Scotty Wiseman, 71

Scotty Wiseman, 71, composer of the classic country song "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You?" died on January 31, apparently of a heart attack. Scotty and the woman who was to become his wife, Lula Belle, reamed up on the National Barn Dance on WLS Radio in 1934, and they made music forever after.

Prophet and Disciple

We usually don't hear from our special roving correspondent until there's a conference or some similar event to cover, but the other day—out of a reasonably clear sky—he paid us a visit.

"Did you see Harry Caudill's letter in the paper?" he asked. "The one where he talks about what the 'coal combine'—he also calls it the 'vast mineral oligarchy' and so on—what these people ought to do when they begin to 'reap gigantic profits from increased use of fossil fuels' "?

Yes, we had seen it, we told him.

"Well, you'll note that he said the corporate 'pillagers'—that was a kind of indirect quote from Bert Combs—ought to 'take the lead in financing a new and better era in Kentucky.' " (We couldn't see the quotation marks around the direct quotes, but we could hear them clearly.) "Now Caudill's not interested just in Kentucky. That letter reminded me of a speech he made several years ago in Charleston, on the future of West Virginia and so forth."

Right, we said. In fact, we'd run a condensation of that speech in this very newsletter (Summer 1978).

"Okay, then. In Charleston, Harry Caudill said that the time has come for the Appalachian governors to begin to act. He said that they ought to start modernizing and cleansing the country that had suffered under exploitation, and that in doing so they should demand the help of the region's corporate owners, as he called them. He named them—Rockefeller, Hanna, Grace, Cheatham and so forth and so on. These 'exploiters,' he said, are scarcely in a position to withhold their cooperation. If they tried to, the state governments could overwhelm them with a legal onslaught—eminent domain, new taxes, et cetera, et cetera."

That sounded like an accurate reflection of Caudill's ideas, we said. But why was he telling us this right now?

He smiled, not too sweetly. "Well, apparently you fail to realize that the governors **have** begun to act. Money—huge sums of it—is flowing **into** Appalachia, not out of it. Into West Virginia, in fact. I suppose Caudill doesn't realize it either; he certainly didn't acknowledge it in his letter to the paper."

We asked him if he could bring himself to be a little more explicit.

"Well," he said, "I was talking to a fellow in Charleston the other day, and without thinking much

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DISCUSSION

The Appalachian Regional Commission: Would We Miss It?



Al Smith, federal cochairman of ARC

The Appalachian Region, as defined by the U.S. Congress, stretches from Mississippi to New York, including mountainous or at least hilly portions of 13 states. Since 1965 the Appalachian Regional Commission has presided over the spending of some \$4 billion in the region, on highways, schools, hospitals, clinics and other facilities.

Now, as we write, it appears that ARC may be in its terminal phase. A plan drawn up by the Reagan Administration's Office of Management and Budget pro-

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The first thoughts come from Ralph Widner, president of the Academy for Contemporary Problems, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. Widner served as the first executive director of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

If the Appalachian Regional Commission is abolished, will it make a critical difference in Appalachia? Yes, but not for reasons most of us would once have considered.

Remember, in 1965 the commission was established as a "temporary" body of Congress. It was to go out of existence after six to 10 years, once development had begun and could be supported by state and local governments. Fifteen years later it is still with us. Is it justified?

When the commission was established, the Appalachian areas of most of the southern states were the Republican "backyards" of one-party Democratic states and as such were getting short shrift from the state capitals. Today most of the states are two-party states, so the argument no longer holds.

In 1965 most federal aid was categorical, and Appalachian communities were hard put to compete with large communities in the rest of the country for their "fair share." With the shift to revenue-sharing and block grants, the strength of that argument has waned.

In 1965 much of the region was suffering from ex-

poses the elimination in 1981 and 1982 of ARC's programs other than those having to do with roads, and the transfer of the road programs to other agencies in 1983. According to the OMB document, "changes in the economic and social well-being of Appalachia cannot be tied to the impact of ARC grants"; the results of the commission's efforts to improve life in the region are "not identifiable."

Local political leaders—mayors and governors—are screaming "Foul!" Senators from the region declare that they will oppose major changes in the agency. So battle lines are being drawn.

The CENTER NEWSLETTER has decided to make a modest entry into the fray by seeking opinions from persons who ought to know. Is OMB right? Are the results of ARC's work "not identifiable"? If ARC is abolished, will it truly be missed? Or has it all along been mostly a great boondoggle, a valuable plaything for governors and bureaucrats?

We hope that the opinions presented here will kick off something of a continuing discussion in these pages. As many times as we've heard the commission praised here and damned there, we know that Appalachia is full of people who have strong opinions about it and its workings. We'd like to hear your thoughts, and we'll publish them as space permits—because we feel, somehow, that the issue is not going to be settled overnight. Too many people and too many interests are involved.

traordinary social and economic problems. In many areas those problems still exist, but the situation is very different today from what it was then.

The loss Appalachia will feel if the commission is carelessly closed down will be the elimination of support for critically important clinics, day-care centers and rural education programs for which it is hard to find other means of support.

While it is possible for the Appalachian highways to be financed out of the federal Highway Trust Fund, that fund is already inadequate to meet national needs in the 1980s.

The greatest promise the commission experiment offered was the opportunity for 13 states to regionally plan, in cooperation with local representatives, a network of employment, housing, education and health facilities using the highways as a framework. Despite some satisfying accomplishments, the states never lived up to that opportunity. They drifted into a state-by-state grant program that no longer strongly justified the need for a regional commission.

Yet it is precisely that which the region and the nation now needs, but for very different reasons. The energy crisis will inevitably bring increasing attention to the potential of Appalachian coal. This will put heavy pressure on barely adequate housing, community services, roads and facilities.

A regional commission would play a vital part in meeting this crisis. Yet, just when we need it for new reasons, its abolition is being justified on old grounds that are no longer relevant. For that we have our own

To Those Who Serve



Berea College President Willis D. Weatherford (r.) congratulates winners of the college's second annual service awards, given on February 19 to persons who in their daily lives are deemed to have exemplified the college's commitments: (from l.)

William Hayes, an enforcement official at the U.S. Office of Surface Mining; Alice Slone, founder of Lotts Creek, Ky., Community School; and Rev. J. Oscar McCloud, general director of the Program Agency, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

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short-sightedness in the past and this short-sightedness of present national policy to blame.

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Our other opinion in this issue of the NEWSLETTER comes from Steve Fisher, associate professor of political science at Emory and Henry College. More reactions will follow in the Spring issue. Send yours!

The ARC has never been in touch with the people of the region it was created to serve. Its focus on "corridor" highways, its advocacy of an outdated and inaccurate growth-center theory of development, its

PROPHET *from page 1*

about it I remarked that I'd heard that his governor over there—Rockefeller—had spent ten million dollars of his own money in his campaign last year. I doubted that it was possible to do that, but that's what I'd heard. My friend laughed. It wasn't ten, he told me, but more like twelve. Twelve million dollars! Now what on earth could you spend twelve million dollars on in West Virginia, running for governor or doing anything else?"

Well? we said.

"And then it dawned on me. The Governor of West Virginia is Harry Caudill's first disciple to sit in an Appalachian gubernatorial chair. He wasn't taking away profits from exploitation or anything else—he was

pork-barrel priorities, and its cumbersome and unrepresentative political structure have made ARC a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution. It is nothing more than another Washington bureaucracy perpetuating a kind of "government by the lowest common denominator" and staffed by people who know nothing about the region. It requires too much of our time and effort to fight the misguided programs and distracts our attention from real enemies and realistic solutions. If it is allowed to continue, its few good projects (primarily in health care) will undoubtedly be cut back or eliminated. ARC's bankruptcy can be seen in its lack of support in the region now that its very existence is threatened. ARC has no valid reason to continue. Good riddance!

plowing money back into the ground where it came from. He was doing what Caudill wants all the governors to do, and doing it in his own individual way. Twelve million dollars is a lot of money, in West Virginia or anywhere else."

But, we pointed out, most governors don't have twelve million dollars to spend for the welfare and rehabilitation of their states.

"Unfortunately true," he agreed. "But every movement has to start somewhere, somehow. It's the beginning that counts. And that sure is some example."

We couldn't deny that. We haven't spoken with Harry Caudill yet, but we intend to check with him and see how he reacts to the good news. Of course, he may already have figured it out for himself. ●

EYE on Publications

Rosiebelle Lee Wildcat Tennessee, by Raymond Andrews (Dial Press). A chronicle of sexual/racial politics, through war and hard times, set in rural north Georgia, whose cotton economy collapsed under the assault of the boll weevil, the Great Depression and technological change. The eponymous heroine is the absolute boss, spiritually and temporally, of the black community of Appalachia. This is the author's second novel; his first, *Appalachee Red*, won the James Baldwin Prize in 1978.

Black Mountain Breakdown, by Lee Smith (Putnam). The protagonist in this novel, Crystal Spangler, is a rare flower blooming in coal-country Appalachia, along the Virginia-Kentucky border, in the kind of town where ladies come bearing Jello-O salads when somebody dies. Being atypical, Crystal is, as you might expect, regarded as rather a strange one by family and adolescent peers. The material here, though not so much the tone, is reminiscent of the celebrated quasi-Appalachian novel *Kinflicks*. Annie Dillard, who has herself acquired some renown as a dweller in rural Virginia, says of *Black Mountain Breakdown* that it "is like a country song."

The Scapegoat, by Mary Lee Settle (Random House). The time: 1912. The scene: a West Virginia coal town, where striking miners led by the legendary Mother Jones do battle with detectives and strikebreakers imported by the operators. This novel too has a woman protagonist—Lily Lacey, daughter of one of the owners but a Vassar graduate who comes home with radical ideas which she proclaims loudly. These notions aren't exactly welcomed by her family or by the leader of the operators' fraternity, who happens to be one of her admirers. Thoughtless, impulsive acts can bring about unthinkable results, as a rereading of this bloody page of history reminds us. The author gained general recognition when her novel *Blood Tie* received the 1978 National Book Award. *The Scapegoat* is part of her Beulah Quintet, which includes the novel *O Beulah Land*.

The Piercing, by John Coyne (Putnam/Berkley). Still another novel, this one a real Appalachian sizzler. Betty Sue Wadkins is a national sensation, like something out of the movie *Network*. Do her seeming stigmata constitute a miracle, as the TV people assert, or a hoax, as the Church declares? Frank DeFelitta, an expert in the field of unholy secrets (he wrote the novel *Audrey Rose*) testifies that he read *The Piercing* "in one gasp-filled sitting." So there!

Trapped! by Robert K. Murray and Roger W. Brucker (Putnam). The 1920s are still remembered as the great age of sensational journalism—ballyhoo, it was called. And one of the greatest sensations of the day

featured a Kentucky spelunker, Floyd Collins, who became trapped in a passageway in the Mammoth Cave country. It's not really an Appalachian story, but it's close enough to claim cousinship, at least. The authors tell the story, and they also analyze the activities of the press, as a personal tragedy (which some observers said could have been avoided) was turned into a media event. In describing the thoroughness with which they went about producing the book, the authors say that they conducted oral interviews in places from "large, well-appointed New England country homes to backwoods Kentucky shacks." That's pretty thorough, we suppose; but we can't help wishing they'd done some interviewing in a few well-appointed Kentucky homes too. Maybe they weren't as thorough as they thought they were.

Neil's Way and Leaves From the Notebook of an Appalachian Physician, by Hugh A. Matthews, M.D. (both books published by the author, P.O. Box 63, Cullowhee, N.C. 28723). Reminiscences of the retired head of student health services at Western Carolina University. An unusual part of the second book consists of interviews with Dr. Jerome R. Reeves, an older physician in mountain North Carolina.

The Invisible Minority, edited by William W. Philliber and Clyde B. McCoy, with Harry C. Dillingham (University Press of Kentucky). This book consists of papers prepared for a conference on Appalachians in Urban Areas, held in 1974 under the sponsorship of the Academy for Contemporary Problems and the Cincinnati Appalachian Committee (now the Urban Appalachian Council).

Radio's 'Kentucky Mountain Boy' Bradley Kincaid, by Loyal Jones (Appalachian Center/Berea College). The first book-length publication of the Appalachian Center, this can fairly be described as a labor of love on the part of the Center's director, Loyal Jones. It tells you pretty much everything you'd want to know about the silver-voiced radio pioneer from Garrard County, Ky. There's a life portrait and commentary, a generous selection of the songs themselves, a checklist, a list of the songbooks produced by Bradley, and a discography prepared by Norm Cohen. "Essentially," says Archie Green in the Introduction, "Kincaid took folksong, a tranquil and beloved gift from childhood, and used high technology to share this tranquility with millions of listeners." This book shows you how he did it. You can order it from the Appalachian Center at the address below; it's \$5.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling.

(NOTE: The Appalachian Center does not sell any other titles. You may obtain books on the Appalachian South from the Council of the Southern Mountains Bookstore, C.P.O. Box 2160, Berea, Ky. 40404.)

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