

# CAMP HILL SLAUGHTER IN JULY, 1931, DID NOT STOP STRUGGLES

## Negro and White United in Croppers' Union And Spread It Through Three Counties

### Growth of Organization and Its Victories Reason for Present Murderous Attacks

By JIM ALLEN.

The croppers of Tallapoosa and Lee counties, Alabama, began to organize the Share Croppers Union in the spring of 1931. The response of the Negro share croppers was quick and immediate. They had starved and frozen in their windswept cabins during the previous winter. They had been forced to take crops on starvation terms in the spring. Food allowances

#### Toil and Hunger



That is the lot of the wife of a Negro sharecropper. In addition to her household duties she must toil in the fields with her husband for a mere pittance.

#### Share Croppers Letters

### Camp Hill Bosses Keeps Negro Hungry At \$4.00 Per Month

(By a Worker Correspondent.)

CAMP HILL, Ala.—I am writing to let you know about Mr. C. L. Pearson. He is a landowner with 25,000 acres of land. He won't repair any houses for his renters. He charges people \$30 for 10 acres of poor land and he won't make any settlement with his laborers.

He claims that all the people that live on his land owe him money. He says if they try to move he will take all their house things and everything they have. When Slaughter went to move, he took all the poor man's house things and put him out of doors.

Franklin Brazzel is a white man at Camp Hill, R. 1. He has a Negro working for him at \$4 a month and he wants him to take that out in old clothes.

There is a merchant, M. Laron, at Camp Hill. Those poor Negroes that owe him money, and can't get any work so they can pay him, he is kicking them around and running them out of town. He ran two out of town already.

Tannie Henderson is a white man who lives on R. 3. He took all the crop his farmer made and nailed up the house and made the farmer pay \$40 before he could get his own house things.

### De Priest Framed Police Attack on Negro Workers

(By a Worker Correspondent)

CHICAGO.—Two Negro workers arrested and beaten by orders of Oscar De Priest, will face trial on Dec. 27. Two conferences have been held for the purpose of mobilizing mass support for the defense of these workers. A mass demonstration in and around the courtroom is being arranged.

The attack on these workers took place just before the elections in November when a number of workers gathered at the Blackwell Memorial Church on Oakwood Blvd., to hear Oscar De Priest, republican candidate for congressman in the First Congressional District.

#### Tells of Good Time

De Priest arrived about 9:30 p. m. and tried to entertain the audience with a story of his travels and of all the good eats he and his wife had enjoyed while he was on tour.

After some time he finally got down to politics and asked the workers to support him and the Republican Party.

#### Calls Cops

Just before he finished speaking he

were cut down to a bare subsistence level. The tyranny of the landowners and their local government had grown fiercer.

The Negro croppers organized in their local groups hammered out their demands: (1) Continuation of the food allowances which had been cut off July 1, when the crop was already cultivated, leaving the cropper to starve or beg until cotton picking time in September; (2) the right of the cropper to sell his cotton for cash, where and when he pleased, rather than to turn it over to the landowner for "division"; (3) cash settlement for the season at cotton picking time; (4) a nine-months' Negro school with free school bus without discrimination; (5) right of a cropper to plant his own garden for his own use; (6) freedom for the Scottsboro boys.

#### "Southern Worker."

Negro croppers and their families came from all parts of the two counties to the union meetings. The Southern Worker, Communist weekly published in the South, was eagerly distributed and read by the Negro peasants. The big white landowners and credit merchants at Camp Hill and other towns in the vicinity attempted to crush the union before cotton picking time.

On the night of July 15, 1931, deputies discovered and dispersed a union meeting. A lynch mob numbering 300 landowning whites and their hanger-on instituted a reign of terror throughout the two counties. The "night riders" lived again. They raced through the countryside, firing broadsides into the Negro croppers' cabins. They raided the cabins searching for literature, the union records, and, above all, the leading Negro organizer. One group of deputies and landowners met Ralph Grey on a lonely road. They fired, breaking his legs. From the ground he returned the fire, wounding one of the officers. Grey was later taken by his fellow croppers to a cabin. A doctor refused to come to attend him. Instead the posse returned, took him by force after a long battle with his comrades, who retreated only when their ammunition was exhausted, and killed him in cold blood as he lay in bed.

Remarkable solidarity and coolness on the part of the Negro croppers saved the organizer of the union. Lynch posses and bloodhounds were after him. The croppers succeeded in hiding him, diverting the lynch mobs and covering up his escape.

#### 40 Arrested, Many Killed.

Two score Negro croppers were arrested and thrust into the Camp Hill jail. Six were known killed and there are reports of many others murdered.

But the news had spread swiftly. The Scottsboro campaign was growing. The Negro and white masses, mobilized by the Communist Party and the International Labor Defense, immediately grasped the basic importance of the struggle of the Alabama croppers against the whole semi-slave system in the South. Protest meetings were held. Telegrams demanding the immediate release of the arrested croppers flooded the county. The local slave-drivers' government was forced to release all the croppers.

#### Victories of Union.

The Negro croppers felt that they were not isolated. They felt the power of their own organization and the wide mass support they were getting from both the white and Negro workers in all parts of the country. The share-croppers' union grew rapidly. It spread into a third county. It won the right for the croppers to plant their own vegetable patches and also a better level of treatment from the slave-drivers. The majority of the croppers were organizing. By the winter of 1932 they were ready to carry through a determined struggle for food, after a summer of intensified starvation and suffering. The landowners were again faced with a stronger and bigger organization of the croppers. There are 900 members in three counties and the union is spreading out—one of the reasons for this attack.

The second phase of the struggle of the Alabama croppers has begun.