

PEONAGE ABOLISHED IN FLORIDA LUMBER CAMPS

As a result of the Martin Tabert case, given publicity in the I. W. W. press the whipping, flogging and leasing of "convicted men" to lumber companies has been discontinued by law in the state of Florida. Here after the Putnam Lumber Co., a Wisconsin concern, whose hireling whipping boss so foully murdered young Tabert, will be compelled to devise other methods to recruit and torture its help. For it is now unlawful to whip them to death. As I understand it: It always has been illegal to murder people in Florida. But the Putnam Lumber Co. did not seem to think so, insofar as its representatives continued to brutally maltreat men and boys left in their charge—and succeeded in killing two that we know of, Martin Tabert and Ned Thompson.

According to news despatches, the leasing of county prisoners to private individuals becomes illegal on the 31st day of December, 1923. The legislators recognized the viciousness of that practice, but evidently they did not want to "break the habit" too suddenly, so they allow it, by law, to exist to the end of the present year. This gives the lumber barons a chance to acquire the habit of hiring men for money, which, same seems to be a general practice among other slave drivers.

In fairness to Florida, be it said: T. W. Higginbotham, who beat Tabert to death, is to be tried next week on a charge of first degree murder. Supt. W. M. Fisher of Putnam Lumber Co., and former sheriff Jones, are under indictment charged with kidnapping and conspiracy, as a result of a deal that ended in the death of Ned Thompson. The warden of the Baker county convict camp of State Senator T. J. Knabb, is under indictment for the brutal whipping of Paul Revere White.

Fellow workers, what do you think of that for (f)logging; in the land of the free and the home of the brave?—A state senator exploiting convicted men?

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How many young men have been murdered in these camps is hard to estimate—two have come to light, murdered, in the past year.

How many boys sleep the eternal sleep in the swamps of Florida? How many mothers wait the return of their wandering sons—in vain? Who can tell? Nobody.

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How many lumberjacks have been murdered by company gunmen in other states?

How many loggers on the west coast have never returned from "up-line" or up-river—and who knows what happened to them?

Ye Gods, fellow workers of the woods, can't you see that you should learn to protect yourselves from this generation of fiends?

—Florida had whipping bosses. Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana and Minnesota lumber companies have gunmen. Where do you come out—can't you see the trend of present-day civilization?—California and Washington jails are full of men who fought the murderous lumber trust. To all intents and purposes they are dead, but not as dead as the man who will not organize and fight for the right to live.

How many unmarked graves are along the right-of-way of the various logging roads?

How many such graves have company gunmen dug in the past year? We hope not many. But we fear the worst! What has become of the loggers we used to chum with? Who are they? We haven't seen them for years.

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Now, one more question: Are you going to tolerate a gunman in the camp in which you work to support him? Are you going to support a gunman so that he can kill you at the bidding of a lumber company—or are you going to organize in the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union No. 120—to put an end to all terrorism; and to put the "terrorist" to work? Line up with your fellow workers. If you have no card—wire for one.

A Regular Performance

P. S.

Peonage has been "remedied" in United States regularly every 30 years or so—each succeeding generation has taken a crack at it. It will be remedied again.

At times it has approximated perfection as an institution, only to "backslide" into what is called "cruel" peonage, which kills the peon. This, it seems, is not desired by the Florida legislators.—They figure a dead peon is no peon at all. Hence, they are "quick" to remedy "cruel" peonage. No nation can stand half free and half in the "can."

T-bone Slim.