

GEORGIA DECLARES WAR ON PEONAGE

FURTHER REVELATIONS OF PEONAGE in Georgia, together with numerous instances of negroes lynched, driven out of the county, or subjected to cruel treatment within the past two years, are furnished by the Governor of the State in a pamphlet entitled "The Negro in Georgia." In the booklet Governor Dorsey indirectly mentions the Williams farm, where eleven negroes were murdered, and cites in all 135 cases where negroes have been mistreated by whites. In the opinion of the *Macon Telegraph*, "the Governor has taken a proper and aggressive stand against lawlessness in Georgia; it is now up to the officials of the various counties to exhibit the fearlessness that alone is becoming in such matters." Says Governor Dorsey in his indictment:

THE LITERARY DIGEST

April 23, 1921

p.17

"In some counties the negro is being driven out as tho he were a wild beast; in others he is being held as a slave. In other counties no negroes remain. No effort has been made to collect the cases cited. If such an effort were made, I believe the number could be multiplied. In only two of the 135 cases cited is crime against white women involved.

"If the conditions indicated by these charges should continue, both God and man would justly condemn Georgia more severely than God and man have condemned Belgium and Leopold for the Kongo atrocities. But worse than that condemnation would be the continued toleration of such cruelties in Georgia.

"The charges . . . came to me unsolicited. I have withheld the names of counties and individuals because I do not desire to give harmful publicity to these counties, when I am convinced that, even in those counties where the outrages are said to have occurred, the better element regret them. I believe that the better element in those counties and in the whole State, who constitute the majority of our people, will condemn such conditions and take the steps necessary to correct them when they see and realize the staggering total of such cases, which, while seemingly confined to a small minority of our counties, yet bring disgrace and obloquy upon our State as a whole and upon the entire Southern people. The investigation and the suggestion of a remedy should come from Georgians and not from outsiders."

In the past, notes the *Asheville (N. C.) Citizen*, "the difficulty of apprehending mob members has encouraged the barbaric custom of burning or hanging negroes without trial by jury." Georgia, which, according to the 1920 census, has a population of 1,689,114 whites and 1,206,365 negroes, has been responsible for a larger number of lynchings than any other State, we are told. "But when the leading lights of a community are forced to go before juries for leading or aiding mobs bent on private vengeance, these depredations against the law will in time lose much of their glamor," believes *The Citizen*. As an example of "Georgia justice," the *Atlanta Journal* points to "the expedition and orderliness with which the (Williams) 'Death Farm' murder case was carried from indictment to a verdict (of guilty) within little more than a fortnight." In order to stamp out peonage in Georgia, and secure justice for the negro, Governor Dorsey makes these recommendations:

OldMagazineArticles.com

WAR ON PEONAGE

"1. Publicity—namely, the careful gathering and investigation by Georgians, and not by outsiders, of facts as to the treatment of the negro throughout the State and the publication of these facts to the people of Georgia.

"2. An organized campaign by the churches to place in every section of Georgia a sufficient number of Sunday-schools and churches, where, in their separate places of worship, the young and old of both races will learn from suitable teachers the Gospel of justice, mercy, and mutual forbearance for all.

"3. Compulsory education for both races.

"4. The organization of State committees on race relations, one committee composed of leading white citizens, another of leaders among the negroes, and local committees made up in the same manner in each county of the State, the committees to confer together when necessary concerning matters vital to the welfare of both races."

As an indication of the support the Governor is receiving in his campaign, we find in the *Macon Telegraph* that—

"A new aggressiveness has arisen in Georgia—or should it be said a keener conscience?—and many Georgians are of the opinion that a house-cleaning is in order. There are quite a number of folks that reside between the Florida and Tennessee boundaries and betwixt the Chattahoochee River and the Atlantic that came from Missouri—and will have to be shown.

"Every sheriff in every county of Georgia in which unsavory conditions exist, who does not energetically do his duty and stand upon his honor like a he-man, stands indicted of a grave offense indeed—of not keeping faith with the people who have placed upon him the sacred robe of office."

"One thing is absolutely certain: An end must be put to conditions that have existed in Georgia," maintains the *Atlanta Constitution*, and the *Birmingham Age-Herald* agrees that "the State and Federal authorities should not stop until this barbarous practise is broken up. Furthermore, if it prevails in other parts of the South, as is not unlikely, it should be stamped out." "Georgia now has an opportunity to do something for herself, for the South, and for the nation," points out the *Nashville Banner*, "and it is to be expected that she will measure fully up to it." As the *Little Rock Arkansas Democrat* sees it, "Georgia must now purge herself of such shameful conditions, and show the world just how exceptional they are, through the speedy conviction and punishment of every guilty white man."



TO RESTORE THE RULE OF LAW IN GEORGIA.

Governor Hugh M. Dorsey declares that if present conditions should continue "both God and man would justly condemn Georgia more severely than God and man condemned Belgium and Leopold for the Kongo atrocities."