

7741 Jones
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'BLACK LEG' TERROR TOLD BY A MEMBER

Band Whipped Anybody Who 'Had Bad Carryings-On,' Kentuckian Confesses.

NEOPHYTES WERE WARNED

They Were Told They Would Be Beaten or Burned if They Re- vealed Secrets—25 Indicted.

PRESTONBURG, Ky., Jan. 9 (AP).—A story of Kentucky mountaineers who wore old stockings with eye holes over their heads on midnight raids on cabins to beat up neighbors of whom they did not approve was related here today, following indictment of twenty-five alleged "Black Legs."

The indictments specifically charging them with beating Miles Barnett, a country storekeeper and farmer, were returned under Kentucky's Criminal Syndicalism and Sedition Law. Its maximum penalty is twenty-one years and \$10,000 fine.

In addition, five of the band were indicted on charges of banding and confederating and bonds were fixed at \$2,000 each.

O. C. Hall, Commonwealth's attorney, said the indictments followed investigations of beatings of men and women by groups of hooded men.

Mr. Barnett, the storekeeper-farmer, who told the grand jury about being whipped, was said to

have been punished for criticizing the gang's activities. "I'm going to send them all to the penitentiary in that case," Mr. Hall declared.

Freed at Former Trials

The band operated along the border of Floyd and adjoining Magoffin Counties and some fifteen of them were indicted in Magoffin more than a year ago for beatings. Hung juries followed their trials. Two pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and paid \$150 fines. The others were put under \$1,000 peace bonds and the Magoffin beatings stopped.

Eight of the twenty-five indicted here were placed in jail in default of \$10,000 bond each, and one, George Cole, came in today and gave \$10,000 bonds. It was signed by S. B. Allen, clerk of Magoffin County, and Lewis Marshall.

Cole blamed the indictment here on his having aided in evicting one of the band from a house owned by a friend.

Albert Marshall also surrendered today, but went to jail. Seven were arrested Wednesday and bench warrants have been issued for the others.

Alex Adams, Magoffin County Attorney, said that Carl Hall, a country storekeeper, was the leader of the band and that it appeared the "Black Legs" helped him collect bad debts.

Jim Marshall, a 30-year-old farmer, one of those indicted and who, Mr. Hall said, had offered to turn State's evidence, told about the band today in the presence of Mr. Hall and Forrest Short, County Attorney.

"And I'd rather stay right here

in jail than go back to Magoffin County," Marshall said.

"They called themselves Black Legs," said Marshall, who at times also referred to the band as "the legion." "There were twenty-five or thirty of them in it. They were part of an unemployment league over in Magoffin County and their job was to go out and whip anybody who talked about them or wouldn't work or had a bad character."

"The members decided for themselves who should be punished. Groups of five to eight men then proceeded to carry out the punishment decided on."

"It was a sort of lodge affair. There were regular meetings, and we were going to have some signal to give us warnings, but we never got that worked out. The members paid 37 cents to join, and their dues were 12 cents and more a month. The president got the dues."

"We met wherever we could when there was a beating to be done. The ones that did it went armed. They wore sacks, dresses or anything else they could find and put old stockings over their heads with holes cut for the eyes. Switches were used for the beatings. They whipped anybody who was having bad carryings on."

Whenever a man joined the organization he took an oath to stand by the others, Marshall went on and if it meant taking anybody's life to save one of the gang from being hurt it was all right to do that.

"Every member of the gang was warned that he would be killed, hanged or burned up if he talked."

"I don't know what the purpose of the gang was or what was its

aim," Mr. Hall said. "They just wanted to be smart and band themselves together and take the law in their hands, and they did that. Sentiment here is high against them."

Mr. Hall stated that he did not believe the band had any outside connections, but that he was investigating reports that automobiles with other States' licenses had been seen at some of the meetings.