

to the border of pathological cases, to live in frame shacks on the Florida Keys in hurricane months?

Why were the men not evacuated on Sunday, or, at latest, Monday morning, when it was known there was a possibility of a hurricane striking the Keys and *evacuation was their only possible protection?*

Who advised against sending the train from Miami to evacuate the veterans until four-thirty o'clock on Monday so that it was blown off the tracks before it ever reached the lower camps?

These are questions that someone will have to answer, and answer satisfactorily, unless the clearing of Anacostia Flats is going to seem an act of kindness compared to the clearing of Upper and Lower Matecumbe.

WHEN we reached Lower Matecumbe there were bodies floating in the ferry slip. The brush was all brown as though autumn had come to these islands where there is no autumn but only a more dangerous summer, but that was because the leaves had all been blown away. There was two feet of sand over the highest part of the island where the sea had carried it and all the heavy bridge-building machines were on their sides. The island looked like the abandoned bed of a river where the sea had swept it. The railroad embankment was gone and the men who had cowered behind it and finally, when the water came, clung to the rails, were all gone with it. You could find them face down and face up in the mangroves. The biggest bunch of the dead were in the tangled, always green but now brown, mangroves behind the tank cars and the water towers. They hung on there, in shelter, until the wind and the rising water carried them away. They didn't all let go at once but only when they could hold on no longer. Then further on you found them high in the trees where the water had swept them. You found them everywhere and in the sun all of them were beginning to be too big for their blue jeans and jackets that they could never fill when they were on the bum and hungry.

I'd known a lot of them at Josie Grunt's place and around the town when they would come in for pay day, and some of them were punch drunk and some of them were smart; some had been on the bum since the Argonne almost and some had lost their jobs the year before last Christmas; some had wives and some couldn't remember; some were good guys and others put their pay checks in the Postal Savings and then came over to cadge in on the drinks when better men were drunk; some liked to fight and others liked to walk around the town; and they were all what you get after a war. But who sent them there to die?

They're better off, I can hear whoever sent them say, explaining to himself. What good were they? You can't account for accidents or acts of God. They were well-fed, well-housed, well-treated and, let us suppose, now they are well dead.

But I would like to make whoever sent them

there carry just one out through the mangroves, or turn one over that lay in the sun along the fill, or tie five together so they won't float out, or smell that smell you thought you'd never smell again, with luck. But now you know there isn't any luck when rich bastards make a war. The lack of luck goes on until all who take part in it are gone.

So now you hold your nose, and you, you that put in the literary columns that you were staying in Miami to see a hurricane because you needed it in your next novel and now you were afraid you would not see one, you can go on reading the paper, and you'll get all you need for your next novel; but I would like to lead you by the seat of your well-worn-by-writing-to-the-literary-columns pants up to that bunch of mangroves where there is a woman, bloated big as a balloon and upside down and there's another face down in the brush next to her and explain to you they are two damned nice girls who ran a sandwich place and filling station and that where they are is their hard luck. And you could make a note of it for your next novel and how is your next novel coming, brother writer, comrade s—t?

But just then one of eight survivors from that camp of 187 not counting twelve who went to Miami to play ball (how's that for casualties, you guys who remember percentages?) comes along and he says, "That's my old lady. Fat, ain't she?" But that guy is nuts, now, so we can dispense with him and we have to go back and get in a boat before we can check up on Camp Five.

CAMP FIVE was where eight survived out of 187, but we only find sixty-seven of those plus two more along the fill makes sixty-nine. But all the rest are in the mangroves. It doesn't take a bird dog to locate them. On the other hand, there are no buzzards. Absolutely no buzzards. How's that? Would you believe it? The wind killed all the buzzards and all the big winged birds like pelicans too. You can find them in the grass that's washed along the fill. Hey, there's another one. He's got low shoes, put him down, man, looks about sixty, low shoes, copper-riveted overalls, blue percale shirt without collar, storm jacket, by Jesus that's the thing to wear, nothing in his pockets. Turn him over. Face tumefied beyond recognition. Hell he don't look like a veteran. He's too old. He's got grey hair. You'll have grey hair yourself this time next week. And across his back there was a great big blister as wide as his back and all ready to burst where his storm jacket had slipped down. Turn him over again. Sure he's a veteran. I know him. What's he got low shoes on for then? Maybe he made some money shooting craps and bought them. You don't know that guy. You can't tell him now. I know him, he hasn't got any thumb. That's how I know him. The land crabs ate his thumb. You think you know everybody. Well you waited a long time to get sick, brother. Sixty-seven of them and you got sick at the sixty-eighth.

And so you walk the fill, where there is any fill and now it's calm and clear and blue and almost the way it is when the millionaires come down in the winter except for the sand-flies, the mosquitoes and the smell of the dead that always smell the same in all countries that you go to—and now they smell like that in your own country. Or is it just that dead soldiers smell the same no matter what their nationality or who sends them to die?

Who sent them down there?

I hope he reads this—and how does he feel?

He will die too, himself, perhaps even without a hurricane warning, but maybe it will be an easy death, that's the best you get, so that you do not have to hang onto something until you can't hang on, until your fingers won't hold on, and it is dark. And the wind makes a noise like a locomotive passing, with a shriek on top of that, because the wind has a scream exactly as it has in books, and when the fill goes and the high wall of water rolls you over and over and then, whatever it is, you get it and we find you, now of no importance, stinking in the mangroves.

You're dead now, brother, but who left you there in the hurricane months on the Keys where a thousand men died before you in the hurricane months when they were building the road that's now washed out?

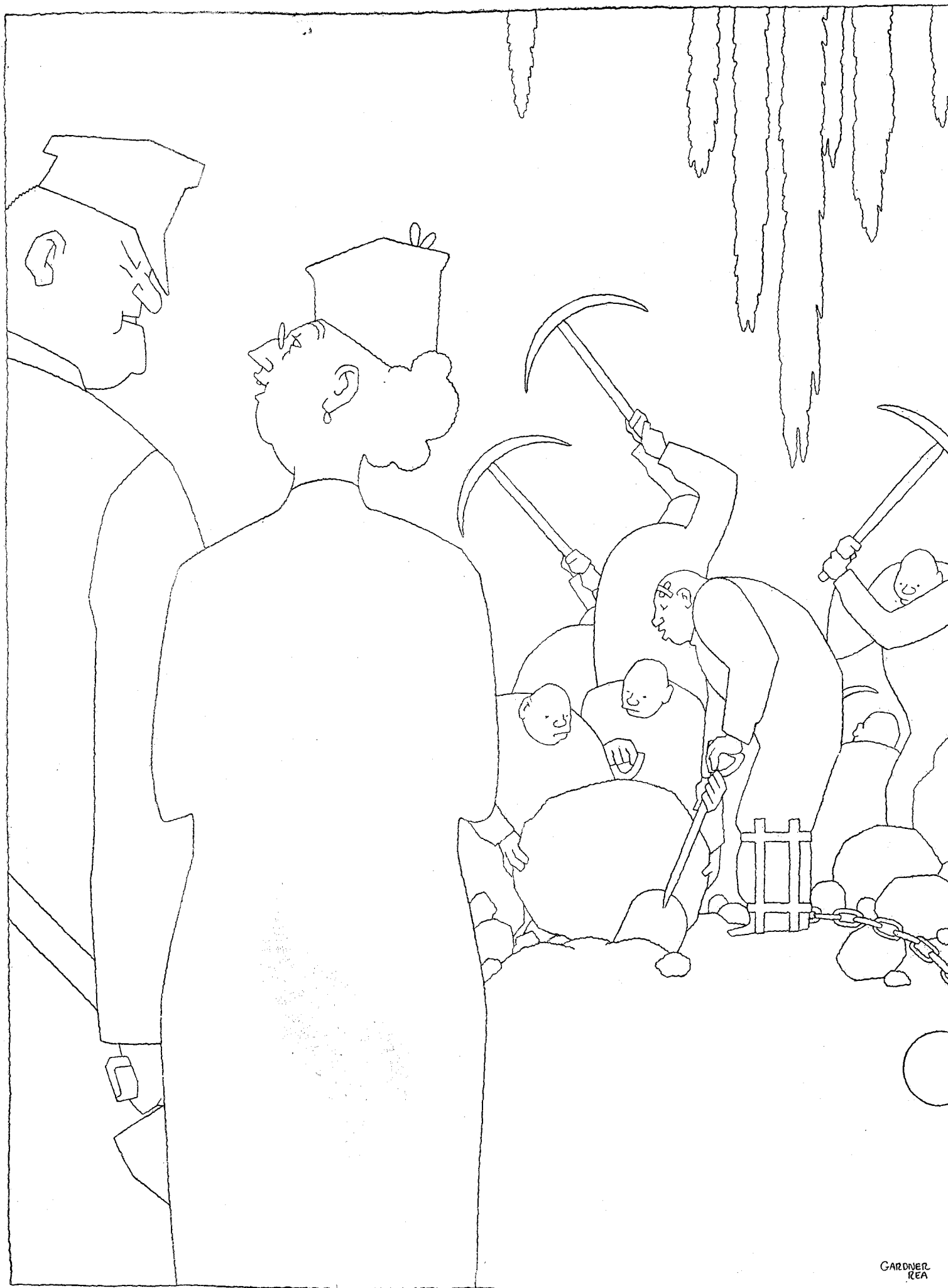
Who left you there? And what's the punishment for manslaughter now?

SOUTHERN HOLIDAY

Seven black men
Hanging high,
Drum their heels
Against the sky.
Seven swinging,
Jerking men
Rehearse like mad
Their dance again.
Seven gallows
In a row—
Seven shapes
Sway to and fro.
Listen, white man,
As you rant,
Silently
They give their chant:

Justice, justice,
Black and white;
Fling a coin
For wrong or right.
Their's the voice that
You shall know:
White man, let
My people go.
Seven swaying
Pendulums
Beat the song
Of herald drums.
The stirred cock calls
The flaming dawn.
Red, how red—
This new-born dawn.

FRANK MLAKAR.



"WHEN DO THEY STOP AND SING?"

Gardner Rea

Consumers' Research on Strike

ARTHUR KALLET

IF the strike of over fifty employees which on September 4 closed the doors of Consumers' Research in Washington, N. J., had taken place in any other liberal organization, F. J. Schlink, president of CR, would be making a contribution to the strikers' funds; his wife, Mary Phillips, a director and the actual ruler of the organization, would be writing clever notes about the perfidy of liberals, and J. B. Matthews, vice-president and labor-relations adviser, would be sallying forth to address mass meetings on behalf of the strikers.

But the strike is not in another organization; it is right at home. And the triumvirate, no longer "friends of labor" but now employers with their own interests to protect, are using every device of openly capitalistic employers, from Red-baiting to violence, to intimidate the strikers and break the strike. Those who have been impressed by the scientific competence and integrity of Schlink or by the brilliant 700-percent Communist orations of Matthews in behalf of the exploited masses, will perhaps doubt this. But it is literally true. On Sunday, a county constable in the pay of Consumers' Research, deliberately speeded up his automobile and drove it into a picket line, knocking down and injuring J. Robert Rogers, a striking physicist on the CR staff. Yesterday newspapers received a public statement signed by Schlink which would do no discredit to Mr. Hearst, with its familiar phrases about "Communists," "Communist-affiliates," and its description of the A.F. of L. union at CR as an "out-and-out 'revolutionary' organization aiming at the unconditional capture of CR."

Because I am an officer of Consumers' Research, and was for many years a director, Schlink has charged me with disloyalty to the organization for siding with the strikers. "Loyalty" to a consumer organization, it would seem, means approving typical capitalistic exploitation of workers, vicious slander of union leaders, and strike-breaking which perhaps will reach its climax only with the hiring of thugs and the calling out of the militia. I have been charged, also, with being an instigator of the strike. If being openly in sympathy with CR's employees in their decision to strike is "instigating," then this charge is true. I "instigated," however, not because of "bias" as is now charged, but actually because I had seen the Schlink family's labor policy in action for several years, and knew that if the union did not now use its only weapon, its members would be fired one by one until there remained no threat to the triumvirate's totalitarian control.

The firing of the president and two other active members of the A.F. of L. union did

not cause the strike. Nor was the cause too-low pay for some and forced, unpaid overtime for others (despite a \$25,000 cash surplus). The underlying cause may be seen in the union's demand for an agreement containing terms which would "protect CR's workers against firings based on whim, personal dislike, minor differences in opinion, or no reason at all." One girl was fired after a post card from a person distrusted by Schlink was found in her desk when it was searched during her vacation. A chemist was recently given notice of dismissal for reasons which included his taking three pieces of toast at breakfast one morning and eating only one, and on another day, taking both milk and coffee at the same meal. A great many technical and editorial workers have been discharged because they could not adjust themselves to the vagaries and conflicts of family control, with decisions made in the office in the day time reversed at home at night.

After a series of forced resignations of employees about two years ago, the active discontent of the entire staff almost disrupted the entire organization. It was imperative to find out what was causing all the trouble and do something about it. Schlink finally agreed to have the employees talk individually and anonymously to some person whom they could trust so that he might diagnose the trouble and discover what needed to be done. A person was selected, but the report soon came back that no one wanted to talk to him. The reason was soon discovered. A sheet had been passed around requesting those employees who had grievances which they wished to express to sign their names so that interviews could be arranged. "Nobody would stick his head in that noose," said one of the employees.

The firing was easy. New employees at CR were required to sign a contract providing that they could be discharged at any time within six months of their employment, with or without cause. When it became desirable to fire a "permanent" employee, the microscopes were wheeled out and millions of tiny causes were found floating around where the naked eye had detected none before. The present employment contract, forced on the employees some months ago, with the aid of Matthews, is an out-and-out "yellow dog" contract, illegal in New Jersey, forbidding employees to engage in any outside activity without written permission of the board of directors.

The situation was overripe for a union and when Susan Jenkins, veteran of the Macaulay strike in New York, was employed by CR organization of the employees was finally assured. The union, the Technical,

Editorial and Office Assistants Union, number 20055, received its federal charter from the A.F. of L. on August 1. On August 23, the board of directors was asked to recognize the union and set a date to discuss a union agreement. A few hours later, three employees, John Heasty, president of the union, John Kilpatrick and Donald Rogers, active union members, were fired. Incompetence was alleged only in Kilpatrick's case. For the other discharges no reasons were given. Heasty had been made head chemist and given a raise soon after he was employed. But then he was guilty of the grave error of permitting himself to be elected president of the union. Rogers, too, had made a mistake. In a union meeting a while before, he had advocated salary increases. Kilpatrick was in charge of promotion. Soon after he came, Miss Phillips said his work was brilliant. Both new subscriptions and renewals to the CR service showed a marked increase while he was there. But he was doomed; he was the second on the staff to join the union and he was seen frequently with union leaders.

In alarm the union officers asked repeatedly for a conference with the board of directors. The reply was a complaint from Matthews about their "dizzying tempo." They went for advice to a regularly accredited A.F. of L. organizer who wrote to me telling of the board's failure to arrange a conference with the union and of the dismissals and asking me to use my influence as secretary of CR to secure action by the board. Immediately a terrible cry of anguish arose from Matthews and the Schlinks. The union's going to an organizer and his writing to me, said Matthews, was blackmail.

Previous to this time, one member of the board of directors, Dewey Palmer, had not been consulted by the board about union problems. Now he was summoned to a board meeting and told to sign a statement that the union was guilty of blackmail and that the union members responsible would be fired. He refused. "I move we accept Mr. Palmer's resignation," said Miss Phillips. "You can't. I haven't resigned," said Palmer. "You're fired from the board," said Schlink, Phillips and Matthews. The response from the employees to this new attack was an immediate petition signed by sixty of the seventy staff members, many not in the union, asking for Palmer's reinstatement. The signing of such a petition was almost tantamount to voting against Hitler in a German concentration camp—and equally effective.

The next day, Schlink called a meeting of the entire staff. There Matthews, burning with righteousness, charged the union with racketeering and gangsterism, intimated that