

# Mississippi Woodcutters Are Getting It Together; They Need Your Help

Money and food are urgently needed by striking woodcutters in Southern Mississippi. The strike began on September 1, when 200 woodcutters stopped hauling wood to the Masonite Company in Laurel, Mississippi. It is now in its third month and has spread to 3500 woodcutters throughout the southern half of the state.

The strike began when Masonite changed the method of weighing wood—thus cutting the woodcutters' pay. Woodcutters work under a system that is much like sharecropping—and were already at starvation level.

The strikers are demanding that the standard unit of wood should be the cord (averaging 4800-5200 pounds or 128 cubic feet) as it is everywhere else, with a standardized contract price for wood. At yards which use both scales and sticks, the woodcutter should be able to choose which system is used. They want to have their organization—the Gulfcoast Pulpwood Association—recognized as their bargaining agent. In short, they are striking to get fair and decent treatment, and to stop the “short-sticking” which the companies have been doing to them for years.

The strike is being conducted against wood dealers who are agents for St. Regis Paper Company, Scott Paper Company, and International Paper Company as well as Masonite. 37 woodyards are now affected—about half of the yards in the Southern part of the state, and virtually all of the big ones. Masonite deliveries are down from 250 loads per day to less than 50—and sometimes no more than a dozen—loads per day.

One reason why the strike has continued to gain strength is the unprecedented degree of racial unity. About half of the strikers are black, and half are white. The companies have fought back with everything they could think of—race baiting, red baiting, klan baiting—to try and divide the strikers and get them fighting each other. All these attempts have failed, and the strike has continued to spread to 200 to 300 more woodcutters each week. At this point, *the only threat to the strikers is starvation*. If the strikers can continue to eat, and can pay their medical bills, rent, and utilities, they will win.

Support is being provided by SCEF, NAACP, Mississippi Council on Human Relations, the Selma Project, Delta Ministry, labor organizations, students, GIs, and others. Strike support groups are being organized in several cities in the South, and in some of the Northern industrial centers as well. But more help is needed, and the need will continue even after the strike is won. Many of the cutters have already been out over two months and bills have piled up; they will have a hard winter and the Pulpwood Association must help them if the organizing is to go on and gain greater strength.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Send money & food to Gulfcoast Pulpwood Association, P.O. Box 754, Laurel, Miss. 39440. (Phone is 601-425-4890).
2. Organize a support group in your community or workplace to collect contributions for the strikers.

The success of this strike will signal the end of the Nixon-Wallace “Southern strategy” based on discrimination and injustice, and will show the way to a racially united, strong, People’s Southern strategy based on the struggle for an end to exploitation and the creation of a new society.