

# SPECIAL PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE SUPPLEMENT

## HARLAN LABOR NEWS

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Last weekend, July 12, it was reported that Mrs. Paul (Kathy) Ball, her two children, Shannon and Catherine, and a neighbor, Lily Mae Rowe, had been kidnapped. On July 14, Bessie Lou Cornett was arrested and charged with the kidnapping.

### Events Leading to the Arrest

At the last Harlan City Council meeting, Bessie got up and asked that the council take an open public stand against the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK has been trying to organize in the county, threatening and beating up people. The Klan has announced a rally will be held in Louisville, Kentucky Municipal Stadium on Saturday, while on Friday, three speakers from the KKK will speak on desegregation in Louisville, sponsored by the Kentucky Taxpayers Association! In response to Bessie's appeal to the Harlan City Council, Hiram Brock, the City Attorney, stated that "if the KKK is after people like you, I'm for it" and then he said "you better shut your mouth or you'll end up behind bars." Miss Cornett has been working on the Harlan Labor News, and Mr. Brock also made some red-baiting remarks about "that communist paper you work for." Since the Harlan Labor News started last year, it has openly stated that it is not afraid to tell the truth. It gives the working people of Harlan County a voice in what is going on here, because it supports and is supported by the workers and their families in their struggles; most recently the Harlan Labor News has been struggling both against the KKK and in the defense of the residents of Georgetown. The coal operators, big business owners, and their police, along with the KKK, want to put a stop to the Harlan Labor News.

A few weeks after the city council meeting it was reported that the wife and two children of Paul Ball had been kidnapped. Both Pete and Phillip Ball are believed to be involved in the Ku Klux Klan activities in the Cloverfork area. Pete Ball was a gun thug at High Splint during the Brookside strike. The Ball boys had been present at the arrest of a Black woman who got a threatening letter from the KKK. Phillip Ball is a school teacher at Evarts High School where Mrs. Christian's home economics class was told to sew robes and capes for the Klan and where KKK leaflets were typed.

On July 13, a car, which had been used to distribute the Harlan Labor News, was stopped as it headed towards Evarts on Highway 30-18, near Golden Ash Bridge. A Ford Maverick with blue lights mounted on the front (not on the top like regular police cars) pulled over the car. A man, whom we suspect was Phillip Ball, a tall thin man with long dark sideburns, got out wearing guns and no badge. He shined a flashlight on the woman driving and said, "Sorry lady, this ain't the car I was after." Meanwhile, a light-colored car with a dark top, full of men, pulled in past the car that had been pulled over and parked next to the bridge, so that if the woman hadn't pulled over, they could have blocked the bridge. Obviously it was the right car, but the wrong person.

Then, on Monday morning, Mrs. Paul Ball showed up at the State Police station claiming that she and her two daughters had been kidnapped over the weekend and that her kidnapper left them stranded in Virginia. She claimed that she finally got a way back to Harlan and went directly to the police. On Monday afternoon, near the same Golden Ash bridge, Bessie Cornett, driving the same car that had been stopped at the same place the night before, was pulled over by State Police who charged her with "kidnapping Mrs. Ball and her children." Then they took Bessie to jail and took the car. During the arrest, Phillip Ball drove up.

As the People's Tribune was going to press, news reached us of the latest incident of coal operator fascist terror in "bloody" Harlan County, Kentucky. On July 14, Bessie Lou Cornett, an Anglo-American worker, was arrested on charges of kidnapping the wife and two children of the leader of the local Ku Klux Klan. This charge is a blatant frame-up directed at the Harlan Labor News and the militant miners' movement in Harlan and the rest of Kentucky. The Harlan Labor News and its staff and friends have been subjected to intense intimidation and harassment because of their outspoken defense of the working people of Harlan. Bessie Lou Cornett, in particular, is hated by the coal operators because she was one of the founders of the Harlan Labor News, was a leading militant in the recent Brookside mine strike in which she helped organize the Brookside Women's Auxiliary, and has been an outspoken opponent of the Ku Klux Klan.

We reprint here the article from the latest Harlan Labor News on Bessie Cornett's arrest, and call on all workers and progressives to answer the appeal for money and support raised by the Harlan Labor News.

(For further details of the struggle against the KKK in Harlan see page 4 of the current People's Tribune.)

It is plain to see the connections here--the Ball Brothers involved in the KKK, Hiram Brock's threats against Bessie Cornett, and Bessie Cornett, the spokesman for the Harlan Labor News. Whether or not Mrs. Ball and her children were actually kidnapped we do not know. We do know there was no reason to suspect Bessie for the kidnapping--she was in Evarts and was seen by many different people, both Saturday night and Sunday.

So why did they arrest her?

They didn't really arrest Bessie for kidnapping Mrs. Ball and her two children. The KKK had threatened her before and now the police claim they were looking for her for 18 hours before she was arrested.

Bessie was arrested for standing up for her rights, for all of our rights! By arresting Bessie, the coal operators, the gun thugs, the local police and the KKK have joined together to take away the rights of working people and poor people in Harlan County. The coal operators and the KKK don't want people to interfere with how they are running things.

It is obvious that the people in Harlan and Cloverfork who are trying to organize the KKK, along with our corrupt politicians there, don't want people like Bessie Lou and the Harlan Labor News or anyone else around who will tell people what the KKK is really about. Everyone knows that Bessie stood and fought with the Brookside miners and their families during the Brookside strike; now she needs our help and support. Those involved in filth and corruption are afraid that the honest people will find out about it and put a stop to it. The people who are gathering around the KKK at this time are those same crooks and gun thugs like Pete Ball, troublemakers, including the school teacher Phillip Ball, who get their kicks out of going in gangs, burning crosses and beating people up and playing policeman. By arresting Bessie Lou Cornett they are trying to tell all the other honest, brave people of Harlan County to "watch out, you may be next!"

We can't sit back and let this happen. Bessie's arrest is an attack on the rights of all workers of Harlan County. Are we going to let the KKK and Hiram Brock take away our rights to "freedom of speech and freedom of the press?"

We say NO!

We've got to put up a fight now! We've got to stop these fascists before they go any further. In a KKK leaflet it says "if you believe in the Constitution and want to get rid of dope and communism, join the KKK." We know these are lies. The KKK says one thing, but means another. They want to lynch Negroes, they want to keep people from having a voice in the government, and from expressing their opinions. The KKK wants people to do what they say and not ask questions.

Take off the robes and hoods and look at the KKK for what it is. The KKK stands for union-busting by turning black and white workers against each other so they can't fight together. They want to bring in fascism, as in Hitler's Germany, where the working people had no rights and were treated like slaves.

Join together to stop this frame up, to free Bessie Lou Cornett, and defend the Harlan Labor News!

## DEFEND THE HARLAN LABOR NEWS

## FREE BESSIE CORNETT

## SMASH THE KKK