

4 ARE CONVICTED OF ENSLAVING MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE SOUTH

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Body

A farm labor crew chief, his two sons and another man were convicted today of holding migrant workers in slavery.

After a day and a half of deliberation, a Federal jury found the men guilty of forcefully keeping the workers, recruited along the East Coast in 1979 and 1980, in involuntary servitude at two Southern labor camps through threats of violence and actual beatings.

Attorneys for the four defendants, Willie Warren, 49 years old, Willie Warren Jr., 26, Richard Warren, 24, and Michael Moore, 21, said the verdict should be appealed. Federal District Judge Ben Krentzman, who revoked a \$25,000 bond on Willie Warren and Willie Warren Jr., said he feared for the safety of witnesses who testified against the men.

Larry Hart, an assistant United States attorney, called the verdict an important statement about the civil and constitutional rights of such laborers. "It shows there are no second- class citizens," he said, "even among migrant workers."

Story of Human Bondage'

In closing arguments to the jury, Susan J. King, another Federal prosecutor, called the evidence "a story of human bondage, despite the fact that slavery was outlawed in this country in 1865."

Miss King said the Warrens and Mr. Moore had enticed the workers by making false promises of high wages. Instead, she said, they were taken to fields where they were forced to dig potatoes seven days a week and cheated out of their promised wages.

The prosecution said the Warrens sold food, wine and cigarettes to workers at the isolated camps at prices so high that many of the workers ended the week owing the Warrens more money than they had earned.

Edwin Ivy, Willie Warren's attorney, said Mr. Warren was within his rights when he sold the workers food and wine. He also said that many of the workers who said they were held against their will were taken by Mr. Warren to doctors and social workers outside the camp.

'I Felt Like a Slave'

"These are not the acts of a man trying to run a slave camp," Mr. Ivy said in his argument at the close of the 10-day trial.

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Richard Simmons, 45, an unemployed cook from Atlanta, told the jury he was picked up by Richard Warren and promised a job unloading trucks for \$4.50 an hour in Augusta, Ga. Instead he was taken to a migrant camp in North Carolina and forced to work.

At the end of three months of working for the Warrens digging potatoes at 25 cents a bucket, Mr. Simmons said, he was left with \$40. "I felt like a slave," Mr. Simmons said in an interview last Friday. "No one ever beat me or held a gun to my head but I saw other people beaten. I learned what to do to avoid trouble. I worked hard and said 'Yes, sir, No, sir' all the time to avoid it."

Taking the stand in his defense, Willie Warren said he did not force workers to drink nor did he try to hire alcoholics. He said he had to buy wine and cigarettes for workers because they demanded it and he said he paid his workers fairly for their labors. Mr. Warren's attorney said afterward that his client's credibility was shaken when he told the jury his former attorney had told him to lie in giving a deposition in a civil trial. That attorney took the stand as a rebuttal witness and said he had given no such advice.

Mr. Warren, Willie Warren Jr. and Mr. Moore could be sentenced to 20 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine. Richard Warren could receive a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and \$20,000 in fines. The men will be sentenced Aug. 30.

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