SCOTTSBORO VICTORY ROCKS THE SOUTH

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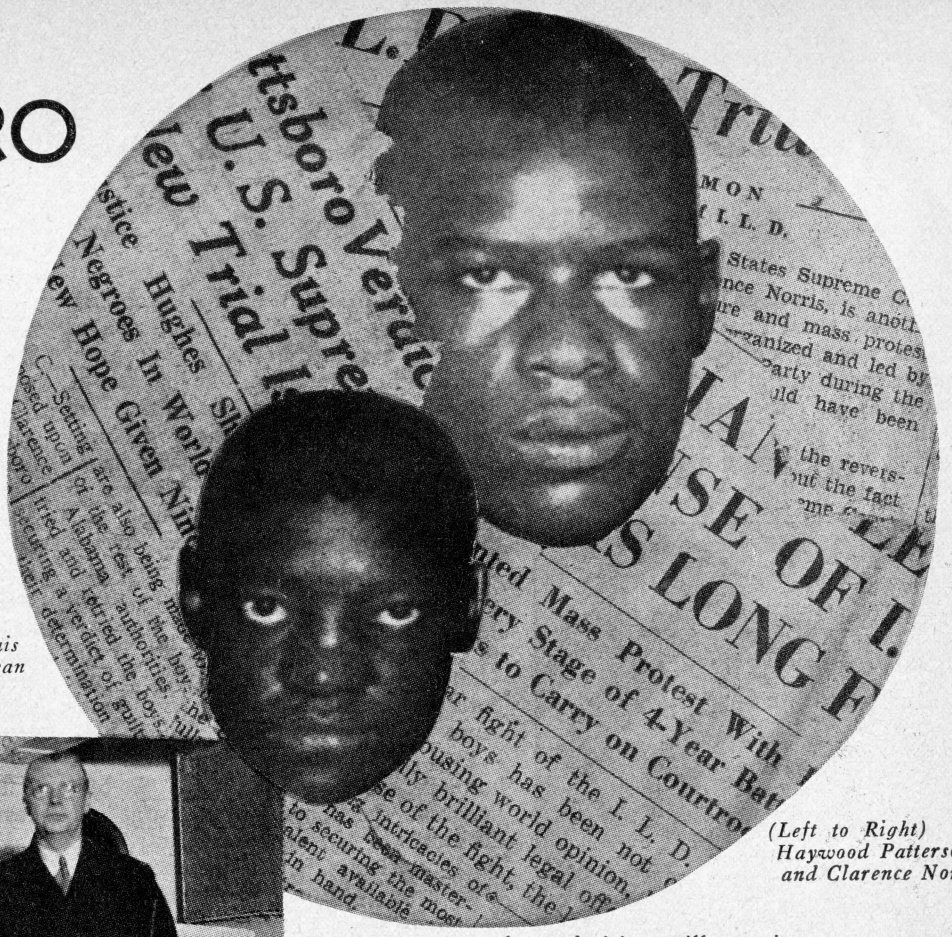

(Left to Right) Haywood Patterson and Clarence Norris.

(Below) Mother Wright and J. Louis Engdahl embarking for the European Scottsboro tour.

The Scottsboro ruling of the United States Supreme Court is rocking the South with its revolutionary implications. Once more the Alabama lynchers see the nine boys snatched from their grasp by a decision wrested from the highest court. But this time more is involved than a reversal of the death sentences against the Scottsboro boys. For the first time in its history, the Supreme Court has been forced, by the excellent legal arguments of Osmond K. Fraenkel and Walter H. Pollak and by the furious pressure of the masses, to give a clear-cut, decision on the right of the Negro people to serve on juries.

For the white ruling class, the denial to the Negroes of their right to vote and of their right to sit on juries has become a symbol of its political rule over an oppressed nationality. For the Negroes, these two important rights have become the symbol of their status as an oppressed group.

The Scottsboro decision sent the officials of the law below the Mason-Dixon line scurrying about in search of legal technicalities and other tricks whereby they could nullify the effect of the Supreme Court ruling. New legislation is being introduced whose plain, and indeed, admitted intent is to keep Negroes off juries. The Southern attorney-generals list this new legislation, preemptory challenges, and actual terror among the methods whereby Negroes may be deprived of their jury rights, in the future as in the past. Meanwhile, the Alabama authorities proceed in a most determined and bloodthirsty manner with plans to re-indict the Scottsboro boys.

What does this mean? Does it mean that the Scottsboro decision was not a victory? On the contrary, we have won a great victory. But, like the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, the Scottsboro decision will remain on paper unless mass struggles are organized to put it into effect.

The road to Scottsboro freedom, to civil rights for the Negroes, is still a long and uphill road. To conduct the struggles to come, organization is needed. And in the work of organization, we have not begun to achieve the progress that our many splendid victories have made possible.

In the four-year struggle on Scottsboro, the I.L.D. has withstood the attacks of our enemies the lynchers, and the more underhanded attacks of Negro and white misleaders who object to making a militant campaign on the Scottsboro case and waging around these boys a fight for the rights of the Negro people—the only way in which the boys' freedom can be won. Despite all these attacks the Negro people and the white workers have joined the I.L.D. by the thousands. Yet our membership remains stationary.

Why is this? What is there lacking? Certainly our I.L.D. members and organizers are devoted to the defense struggle; certainly they are doing good work. Yet there is in the I.L.D. districts and branches a lack of understanding as to how to hold new members. Little attention is given to educating and developing the members we draw in. There is a lack of attention to the basic problems of holding regular meetings and carrying them on in an interesting and well-organized way; keeping the dues payments up to date; visiting members who do not come to the meetings; of building the LABOR DEFENDER. There is far too little attention given to the very basic task of prisoners' relief.

These problems must be given greater attention by the I.L.D. districts and branches, and ways must be found to solve them. The question of holding the new members, of making them an integral part of the organization, of involving them directly in the work—these must be considered in every branch. To conduct the struggle ahead of us, to free the Scottsboro boys, Angelo Herndon, the Sacramento defendants, to fight back the terror in New Mexico, to give adequate aid to the political prisoners and their families; we need a large and a well-functioning I.L.D.