

The Socialist Party Supports the Herndon Campaign

By ANNA DAMON

Acting National Secretary, I.L.D.

The Socialist Party, by action of its National Executive Committee, has thrown its forces into the campaign to free Angelo Herndon. Five thousand petition lists have been taken by the N. E. C. for circulation in the branches and among membership of that party.

This action comes after earlier declarations of support for Angelo Herndon, made by Norman Thomas and other Socialist leaders. The decision to enter the Herndon campaign was communicated to the I.L.D. in a letter which is quoted below. All the requests made in the letter have been fully met by the International Labor Defense. The 5,000 petitions carrying only the name of the Socialist Party and the Young Peoples Socialist League have already been supplied and sent out and we hope that we will very soon have the first of the 500,000 signatures which these petitions will hold to add to the total already on hand in our office.

Following is the letter in full.

"The Socialist Party
of the United States of America
549 Randolph Street
Chicago, Illinois

July 25, 1935

"Anna Damon,
International Labor Defense,
80 East 11 Street, Room 610,
New York City.

"Dear Comrade Damon:

"The national executive committee meeting in New York decided to aid in the petition campaign for the freedom of Angelo Herndon and the repeal of the Georgia 'insurrection' law.

"Unfortunately, because of the political situation and because your and other Communist 'innocent' organizations have been used in a drive to try to destroy the Socialist Party, it was impossible for the executive committee to agree that the Socialist Party be included with the other organizations on your petition.

"We should like five thousand copies of the petition with the changes suggested on the enclosed copy.

"That is, instead of 'sponsored by the following organizations, etc.' the petition should read 'sponsored by the Socialist Party and nine other national organizations'.

"Instead of your return address, ours should be used. If you do not want us to use the name 'Angelo Herndon Petition Committee' at our address, change it to Angelo Herndon Committee at the address given.

"Since any change would necessitate a new plate, I am certain that these changes can be made without spoiling the effect of the petition.

"Our local organizations have been instructed that they are not to participate in any joint campaign for the freedom of Herndon with the I.L.D. or any other Communist organization.

"Please be assured that we will do everything in our power to get these petitions signed. We regret the fact that there can be no joint campaign.

"I would appreciate learning how and when you intend to present this petition to Governor Talmadge.

Fraternally,
CLARENCE SENIOR,
Executive Secretary."

While greeting this partial step towards united action on the part of the Socialist Party, we sincerely hope that it is only a first step towards more complete cooperation with the I. L. D. and the other 10 organizations under whose united sponsorship the petition is circulated in behalf of Angelo Herndon and the 18 other victims of the vicious slave law under which he was indicted and sentenced.

We feel, that in order to hasten full cooperation in this vital drive, it is necessary for us to deal with certain points raised in Clarence Senior's letter, which clearly show that the N. E. C. of the Socialist party is laboring under many serious misconceptions as to the character, role and work of the International Labor Defense. We feel that with these misunderstandings cleared up there would be no obstacles in the path of the broadest united action—action of the scope that is necessary to reach our minimum goal of two million

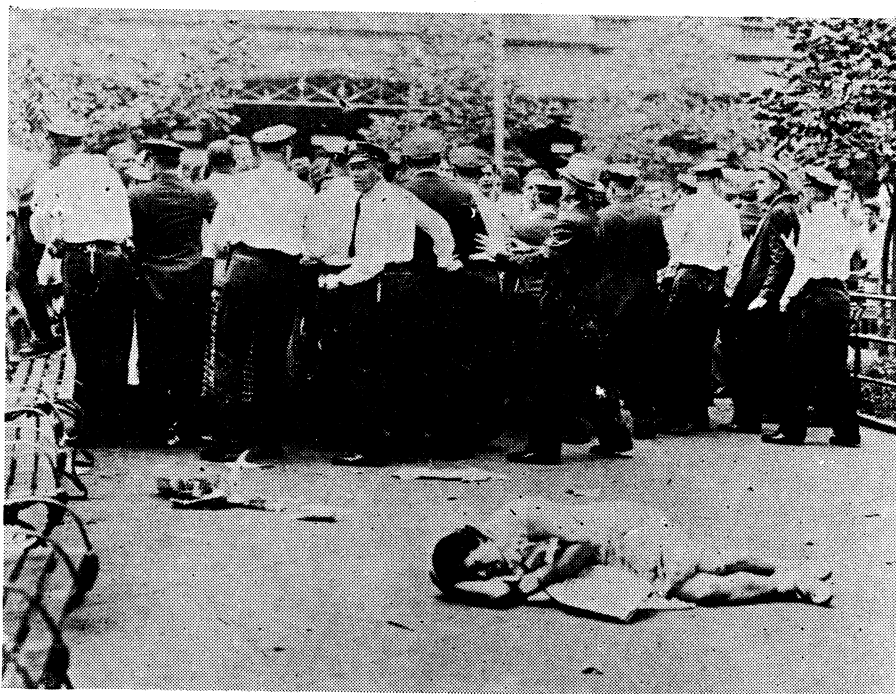
signatures to the petitions for Herndon's unconditional freedom.

"Unfortunately," Clarence Senior writes, "because of the political situation and because your and other Communist 'innocent' organizations have been used in a drive to try to destroy the Socialist Party, it was impossible for the executive committee to agree that the Socialist Party be included with the other organizations on your petition."

The members of the I. L. D., the people who work with the I.L.D., the tens of thousands of trade-unionists and people belonging to the Republican, Democratic, Socialist and Communist parties, or to no political party, who have been defended and aided while in jail by the I. L. D., and hundreds of thousands who have supported our campaigns, know the I.L.D. to be a non-party organization.

Many of the major defense campaigns of the I.L.D. offer concrete proof of this statement. In defense of the Passaic strikers, workers of varied political affiliations; defense of the Centralia prisoners: the Harlan miners' cases involving defense of Industrial Workers of the World, Republicans, Democrats as well as Communists; defense of the Scottsboro Boys and Tom Mooney—all these defense battles were a fulfillment of our pledge to "stand ready to cham-

She asked for relief in front of New York's City Hall.





—Film and Foto League

Anna Damon

pion the cause of all those who are victimized for their activity in labor's ranks regardless of their political, racial, national, religious affiliations.

We started out with a clear cut program of giving aid to the victims of capitalist terror in the United States and abroad and we have a long and impressive record of defense to look back on—Scottsboro, Herndon, Gallup, Burlington, Gastonia, Sacramento, Imperial Valley and tens of thousands of others.

The I.L.D. is no "Communist" or Communist "innocent" organization. The fact that we have defended many Communists does not make us a Communist organization. The official organ of the Communist Party, the Daily Worker, supports our work in its columns. The Communist Party fully endorses our program and policy. The I.L.D. appreciates this support. As for defense of Communists, what organization is it whose members have been singled out for special persecution by the police and courts, by the deportation authorities, by the state itself, because of its aggressive leadership in labor struggles?

But we have never limited our work to defense of Communists alone. We have consistently put forward every effort in the defense of Socialists, at home and abroad, arrested or persecuted in the class struggle.

No one can bring forward a single case in which the I.L.D. has refused to aid a Socialist, victimized by capitalist justice.

As for "destroying the Socialist Party"—well, we would like to hear about any single instance in which by any stretch of the imagination it might be said that the I.L.D. acted with such a

thought in mind or to such an end.

The letter further states:

"We should like five thousand copies of the petition with the changes suggested on the enclosed copy.

"That is, instead of 'sponsored by the following organizations, etc.' the petition should read 'sponsored by the Socialist Party and nine other national organizations'."

Organizing joint sponsorship for the Herndon petition was never just a question of the additional numbers enlisted in the collection of signatures, which the Socialist Party might add to those of the International Labor Defense, the American League, the League for Industrial Democracy, the Church League for Industrial Democracy, the Communist Party, etc. The mere fact that on one petition, there is a united front of these bodies, would itself serve as a means of inspiring workers, of giving them renewed confidence in the ability of the masses to act unitedly. It has always been a basic plank in the program and policy of the I. L. D. to unite in common effort, to enlist the support of any and every organization in the fight to free those who gave their freedom in labor's cause, those who are victimized by ruling class terror, and national oppression. It is only in this way that we have been able to rally hundreds of thousands who might not be willing to support an isolated I.L.D. campaign, sign or circulate an I.L.D. petition, in the fight to win freedom for our political prisoners.

The Socialist Party letter says further:

"Our local organizations have been instructed that they are not to participate in any joint campaign for the freedom of Herndon with the I.L.D. or any other Communist organization."

The latter part of this sentence we have already dealt with. It is the beginning of it that we feel needs the greater emphasis. Some of most successful defense battles of the I. L. D. have been fought and won, precisely because all the local organizations in a given territory have united with the I.L.D. in defense of a local victim of terror and oppression. We could cite hundreds of such examples—Hillsboro, Illinois is perhaps the most recent and outstanding. Because there was no division in the ranks of those outside in defense of the 14 behind the bars, a few of whom were Communists—one was the state secretary of the Young People's Socialist League, the others were unemployed Southern Illinois miners—all 14 are free today.

The I. L. D. has learned through ten years of experience that the most effective mass defense is united mass defense—locally, nationally and internationally.

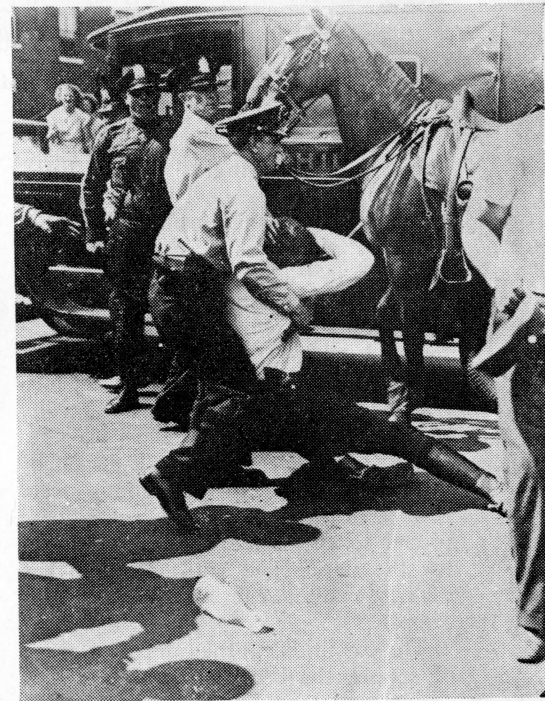
In the Herndon campaign itself, some

of the most successful rallies were held in those cities where they were prepared and conducted under the banner of unity. In Chicago, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Harlem, St. Louis, Socialist locals form part of the united Herndon defense committees. Leading Socialists have spoken on the same platform with Herndon in Chicago, St. Louis and Indianapolis where Powers Hapgood, a member of the N. E. C. of the Socialist Party addressed the meeting.

The I. L. D. welcomes this support most whole-heartedly. We know how much it can achieve. We saw how much it has achieved in the past.

We know also how vital it is at this moment, to save the life of Angelo Herndon.

The United States Supreme Court, before whom a petition for rehearing of



In Philadelphia. What strikers face all over America today in the path of developing fascism.

Herndon's appeal has been filed, meets the first week in October. The time during which Herndon can with certainty remain out on bail and off the chain-gang, is drawing very short.

Between now and the time of the consideration of the petition by the United States Supreme Court, the broadest form of united action must be achieved. Joint mass action by every justice loving individual and organization in the form of demonstrations, meetings, passage of resolutions addressed to the Supreme Court for Herndon's freedom, must be developed.

Speed up the collection of the signatures. Herndon must be saved from death on the chain gang.