

# A NEW POWER

The speech made by **ANNA DAMON** Acting National Secretary of the I.L.D. at the Herndon Victory Meeting. Among the other speakers were **NORMAN THOMAS**, **ROY WILKINS** of the N.A.A.C.P., **ROGER BALDWIN**, **MARY FOY** and **MOTHER BLOOR**.

For the second time since the Herndon case began in June, 1932, we are able to register a victory against the forces of reaction. For the second time Angelo Herndon has been wrested from the hands of his captors and freed for a time at least on bail. But this second victory is of far greater significance and of much greater consequence to us all than the first.

The first time Angelo Herndon was freed on bail, no legal battle had been won. All the rulings in the court were against him and his defenders.

The second time Angelo Herndon was freed on bail, less than two weeks ago, it was on the crest of an important legal victory. Judge Hugh L. Dorsey of the Fulton County Superior Court, ex-governor of the State of Georgia, upheld the defense contention that the slave insurrection law under which Herndon was tried and sentenced to the chain-gang was unconstitutional. More than this, behind the defense attorneys at the habeas corpus proceedings in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 12, stood not only the organized strength of the International Labor Defense. Behind Angelo Herndon and his legal defenders, stood a new power, a broad united front of defense.

How was this united defense brought about? It did not just happen. It was not an accident. A great sentiment against sending Angelo Herndon to the chain-gang existed all over the land and in many parts of the world. Indignation against this clear and obvious breach of civil liberties and democratic rights as typified by the "insurrection" law on which the sentence was based was wide-spread. Here was an issue on which political opponents, public officials, men of arts and letters could agree whole-heartedly.

Deep-rooted in every strata of the population as this sentiment for Angelo Herndon's freedom was, widespread as it was, it would have remained inert and ineffective if it had not been organized into a solid fighting front of defense.

The freeing of Angelo Herndon in \$8,000 bail is a magnificent victory for united action. It is a clear indication of the possibilities that lie before people of the United States in their fight against increased terror and reaction.

The pressure of defense cases has grown enormously in recent months. Where there used to be one case, one flagrant violation of labor and civil rights there are now hundreds—to say thousands would not be an exaggeration.

Armed thugs roam the streets of Birmingham, Alabama, and surrounding industrial centers, kidnapping workers and organizers, beating them and often taking their lives. When the sharecroppers, members of the Share Croppers Union, or of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, go on strike for a living wage, lynchings, violence, terror, arrests are the answer of the landowners.

In Gallup, New Mexico, where the miners banded together into a fighting union and stuck by their demands until they won, the Morgan controlled companies and administrations resorted to one of the rawest frame-ups in labor history to try to railroad ten innocent men to the electric chair. Only a mass movement organized among local unions and central bodies saved their lives.

In California where vigilante rule is the order

of the day, the list of defense problems grows daily. There are the Sacramento defendants facing one to fourteen years in jail each for organizing unions. There are the Modesta cases and the Scalers cases, involving the trade-unions of the seamen and longshoremen, the Eureka cases in which members of the Lumber Workers Union are involved.

But more significant than the numbers of cases, is the nature of the struggles they represent. The attack is on a wider front today than it was in past years. Workers of every shade of political opinion, of every stage of economic and social development are subject to the terror. The recent happenings in Tampa, Florida, where two Socialists and a Democrat were beaten, tarred and feathered, and one of them murdered are cases in point.

Great battles lie ahead for the organized defense movement of the United States. Not only to shield the victims of the future, but to maintain their families, to help keep their homes intact until they are restored to them once more. Relief to the political prisoners and their families is as much the responsibility of every liberty loving individual in the United States as support of their defense.

Spurred on by the victory in the case of Angelo Herndon we can move forward with renewed energies. The fight for Herndon's freedom is not yet won. The State of Georgia has already filed notice of appeal against Judge Dorsey's decision. They are preparing a bitter siege for the preservation of a powerful weapon, the ancient insurrection law. They are determined still to send



*Angelo Herndon signing out of Fulton Tower jail. Let's keep him out.*

The widening front of terror must be met by a widening front of defense. In the Herndon defense we have the finest lesson, the most splendid example of the effectiveness of united action. In the defense of the Scottsboro boys, whose trial comes up in January, the same united action is now in the process of being organized.

But in each case, the same efforts are gone through, the same labored slow process of gathering our forces, marshalling them into position for powerful action. How much more effective would our efforts be if there was one permanent united labor defense organization in this country ready at a moment's notice to spring to the defense of the victims of ruling class justice.

Angelo Herndon to his death on the chain-gang. But if it was possible to win this victory in the Herndon case, it is possible to win wider support for the finish fight—his unconditional freedom. And why is it not possible to build a united movement of defense and relief for all political prisoners, that will swing the jail doors open for Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings, J. B. McNamara, the Scottsboro boys, the Kentucky miners, and all the labor prisoners? It is possible. This is the task that lies before us. And though it is indeed a great one—spurred on by the splendid victory for united action that we are celebrating here tonight—we can all work together for its successful accomplishment.