

On the Struggle to Release A. Herndon from Chain Gang

By ALLEN JOHNSON

IN the two years that have elapsed since the white ruling class condemned the nine Scottsboro boys to death on the traditional pretext of rape, an historical change has taken place in the South.

The white workers, without whose aid the Negroes cannot emancipate themselves, are also beginning to realize that their own release from the hell of capitalism depends on a mutual struggle with the Negro people against the common enemy, and among them too an epochal change has taken place in the past two years.

Countless instances of this historical change could be cited. In Montgomery, Ala., the feudal capital of the Black Belt, the writer, a few days ago, sitting in an automobile, asked a passing Negro worker to direct him to another part of the city. After thanking him, the writer asked him if he had heard of the Scottsboro case. Of course, he had. And had he heard of the International Labor Defense. Without hesitation, the Negro replied: "Have I heard of it? Why I'm a member of it and I don't care who knows it even if I go to jail for it this minute." For a Negro worker in the Black Belt to tell this to a white man he has never seen before, especially since only a few days before the city government in Montgomery had passed what is almost certainly the most arrogantly vicious anti-workingclass law ever passed in the United States, a law which literally makes it a crime for a man to discuss Communism with his wife, is to do something which would be unthinkable two years ago.

On the day after this incident took place, Jane Speed, a young white woman who was arrested for speaking without a permit on May Day in Birmingham, told the judge who had convicted her that she refused to take advantage of his offer for an extension of time to get bond unless the judge also gave a similar extension to a Negro worker, Goodwin, who had been convicted by the same judge for knocking the white policeman down who had brutally wrenched her arm while arresting her.

Typical Example

These two are but typical examples of the conscious, rising militancy of the Negro workers in the South, and of the growing unity between black and white workers.

But of all the evidence certifying the fact that the Negro people are awakening to the realization of the necessity of a revolutionary struggle if they are to break their feudal chains, and that white workers have already joined in that struggle, the case of Angelo Herndon stands out preeminently.

The developing class-consciousness of Herndon himself, and of his treatment by the white ruling class, is in itself an indication of the tremendous revolutionary upsurge in the South in the last two years. Two years ago, shortly after Herndon became a member of the Young Communist League, he was arrested by the Birmingham police, for "hanging around white Communists," beaten in jail and ordered to tell the whereabouts of the white Party organizer in Birmingham at that time. "Where is John Smith," the police asked him. "I don't know where John is," Herndon replied. "I haven't

seen him in days." A policeman seized Herndon by the throat and said: "You black B——, what do you mean by calling Mr. Smith by his first name. He's Mr. Smith to you, do you understand?"

Action Necessary

A few months later Herndon was again involved in a "situation" in which the question of "Mister" and white Communists was in the forefront. But this time the title "mister" was being demanded FOR Herndon by Ben Davis, I.L.D. attorney in Atlanta, and the charge against Herndon was not that he was "hanging around" with white Communists, but that he was LEADING them, along with Negro workers, in a revolutionary struggle for relief from the city government for all the unemployed workers in Atlanta. And this time the white ruling class sentenced Herndon to from 18 to 20 years on the Georgia chain gang.

The workingclass throughout the entire country, before it is too late, must mobilize its forces to demand the release of Herndon.

Send your protests to Fulton County, Georgia, officials, and to Fulton Towers Prison, Atlanta, the feudal dungeon where Herndon is being confined. Save this workingclass fighter from death on a Georgia chain gang!

For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule.—Communist Manifesto.