

Angelo Herndon's Own Story Of Treatment in Fulton Jail

(As told to Ben Davis, Jr.)

"SINCE the Georgia Supreme Court upheld my chain-gang sentence of 18-20 years the bosses and their jail tools have increased the pressure on me," is the way Angelo Herndon, militant Negro unemployed organizer addressed me the morning when I visited him in the Fulton County Tower. Herndon said, "I know that they must be raiding the homes of the comrades and militant Negro and white workers outside, by the way they were treating me in here. They hold up all of my mail and won't let me have anything at all to read. I used to get the Daily Worker sometimes, but now they won't let me have that or anything else, since the Supreme Court decision."

A letter had been sent to Herndon from New York, with a \$4.65 money order inside. The letter was postmarked May 31, but he did not receive it until June 5. This is the usual practice now, especially since the Georgia Supreme Court's decision has said in effect "that Negroes in Georgia have no rights which the Southern ruling class is bound to respect." The decision lends an official endorsement and color to all the torturous treatment which Herndon receives.

Two months ago mass pressure forced the Georgia authorities to give Herndon a special physical examination, but they whitewashed the report and tried to "hush the matter up." But the news was spread that the examination was a mere form, so the authorities were forced to examine Herndon again. This time they stated "nothing was wrong with Herndon, that his chest and stomach were OK, although he may have gall bladder." In addition to this, the physician's report read that "Herndon refused treatment." This morning I asked Herndon about this, and he stated, "These fascist dogs are lying. They didn't even offer me any treatment, and they know it. Certainly I didn't refuse treatment as bad as I need it." I asked Herndon whether he was receiving any medical attention at all. I told him that a sympathetic white woman doctor had sent him a shoe-box full of medicine which she gave to the county physician. The county physician promised to give the entire box to him. But Herndon has only received two bottles of medicine from the box. "The county doctor gave me a bottle of liver extract and said that the white woman doctor had suggested that I take this. He led me to believe that he had gotten the medicine for me himself. I didn't ever receive a shoe-box of medicine," Herndon stated.

Threatened With Chain-Gang

Herndon said, "They have been threatening to send me to the chain-gang every day since the Supreme Court ruling. Jailer Bob Holland says 'nothing's the matter with Herndon. Other niggers are in here and nothing's the matter with them!'" Herndon would have been sent to the chain-gang after the expiration of ten days from the Supreme Court ruling, but notice of appeal to the United States Supreme Court was filed, and this has stayed the execution of Herndon's sentence. Therefore, legally the

State has no right to send Herndon to the chain-gang as long as his case is in process of appeal.

Herndon's health is seriously broken. A leading Negro surgeon whom the Georgia authorities were forced to secure to examine Herndon, has already stated that Herndon's chest is not normal and that in certain spots it recedes, indicating that there might be incipient tuberculosis. Herndon himself states that "everything I eat hurts my stomach, and most of the time



Angelo Herndon

causes vomiting." He has lost more than 20 pounds during his two years' imprisonment. Again he says, "My eyes hurt and worry me all the time and they won't give me anything for them."

HERNDON has made some very valuable and interesting contacts in jail. Recently he formed a friendship with two Jewish prisoners who were charged with swindling a Greek merchant out of \$9,000.00. "They were very nice to me and said they thought my charges were framed-up. They promised to send me a Russian-English dictionary." True to their promise, they have sent Herndon the dictionary, but it is doubtful if the jailer will let Herndon have it. The jailer may think that the Russian language contains some secret code from Moscow and turn the dictionary over to "red-baiter" John Hudson, chief prosecutor of the "Atlanta Six" and Herndon cases.

A young white prisoner formed a great admiration for Herndon and used to stroll over to Herndon's cell to visit him. (They don't allow Herndon out of his cell, not even to get exercise, although Herndon has repeatedly asked for the privilege to move around in the hallway just to "limber up.") Once when this prisoner was at Herndon's cell, the guard came up and threatened him, telling him "to get away from that cage. We don't allow nobody to hang around that cell. Besides you ought to be ashamed of yourself talking with a nigger." The white boy replied, "He's as good or better than you are." This prisoner is very friendly toward Herndon and they exchange cigarettes, money, paper, stamps, and other comforts. He thinks Herndon's sentence is an "outrage!"

(To Be Concluded Tomorrow)