

Broad Unity Established in Fight for Herndon

By ANNA DAMON

Acting National Secretary of the International Labor Defense

PART I

In the first month of the campaign for 2,000,000 signatures demanding that Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia free Angelo Herndon and secure the repeal of the "insurrection" law under which he was sentenced to 18 to 20 years on the chain-gang, more than 125,000 signatures have been secured and turned in to the National Herndon Petition Committee.

When we look at this figure on the one hand, and on the other hand at the progress made toward bringing together the various organizations of the working class in this campaign, we can say that the result is very encouraging.

The figure does not represent anywhere near the total of signatures which have been collected. Every petition list has spaces for 100 names. There is no question that thousands of lists are in circulation and already partially filled.

There are now 75,000 petition lists in circulation. But these were not automatically put into circulation a month ago when the campaign began. It is only two weeks since the Socialist Party received 5,000 specially printed petition lists, following the decision of their National Executive Committee to par-

ticipate in the signature collection campaign. The American Youth Congress has even more recently received for circulation 1,000 more. The Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Society, the International Workers Order, and hundreds more local and national organizations have been drawn into this campaign in the course of the past month.

Campaign Only Begun

It is safe to say that the campaign is only begun, and that its growing impetus will speed it tenfold and more in the next weeks.

Never before has any campaign of the International Labor Defense in the United States officially brought into its orbit the broad group of national organizations which are participating in this drive to free Angelo Herndon. The Church League for Industrial Democracy, the Young Communist League, the Young People's Socialist League, the Negro Masons, the International Labor Defense, the American Federation of Hosiery Workers (A. F. of L.), the International Workers Order, the American Youth Congress, the American League of Ex-Servicemen, the Pullman Porters, the National Association of Colored Women, the So-

cialist Party, the Communist Party, the League for Industrial Democracy, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American League Against War and Fascism, the National Student League, the National Unemployment Council, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the Sharecroppers Union—these are only a few of the national organizations which have in the first month of the campaign been drawn into participation. In addition, hundreds of local organizations, local unions, and many state and city organizations of national bodies, have joined in.

The signatures already received come from 45 states and seven foreign countries.

Local Bodies Active

In many of these states, the fullest cooperation is being established between not only the local bodies of all the national sponsoring organizations, but also local bodies whose national organizations are not officially participating as yet in the petition drive—such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Ministers' Alliances and other groups of various denominations.

This united action is even broader and more inclusive on a city scale throughout the country.

Symbolizing the broad appeal of this campaign, we can also cite the great success of the speaking tour of Angelo Herndon from coast to coast and back, and of the tour of the replica of the Georgia chain-gang cage, with Donald Burke in charge, which is still continuing. These tours have been successful, it must be pointed out, in spite of underestimation and consequent lack of adequate preparation, in many cities.

Fifty thousand copies of the pamphlets "Twenty Years on the Chain-Gang" by Elizabeth Lawson, have been sold, and the demand for more and more literature to use in the campaign guarantees the broadest circulation for the new Herndon pamphlet "Hell in Georgia" by Sasha Small, which has just come off the press, and will sell for two cents.

Two more examples may be cited of the broad pressure developed in this campaign:

Negro Lawyers Back Drive

First, the action of both the National Bar Association, the biggest organization of Negro lawyers in the United States, and of the National Association for the Advance-

ment of Colored People, in preparing and seeking permission to file with the United States Supreme Court, briefs *amicus curiae* (as friends of the court) in support of the application for re-hearing of the Herndon appeal which has been filed by Whitney North Seymour and his associates on behalf of the International Labor Defense.

Second, the securing of a number of signatures to the petition from eleven Congressmen, and from state and city officials. The United States Congressmen who have signed the petition are: J. H. Hoeppel and Byrd N. Scott of California, W. L. Burdick of North Dakota, Fred N. Hildebrandt of South Dakota, John Lesinski of Michigan, C. G. Binderup of Nebraska, George J. Thomas R. Amle of Wisconsin, Vito Marcantonio of New York and Schneider, Gardner R. Withrow and M. Zioncheck of Washington. In addition, Matthew Dunn of Pennsylvania and Caroline O'Day of New York have expressed their support of the campaign in letters to Governor Talmadge of Georgia.

Energetic work in Pennsylvania has resulted in putting on record a number of political figures in that state, including Mayor William McNair of Pittsburgh, Dr. Frederick C. Roberts, mayor of Easton and

Al Tronzo and Homer Brown of the state legislature.

Weak Work in Unions

The weakest front in the whole campaign, both nationally and locally, has been the penetration of the trade unions. The only two A. F. of L. unions which are participating in the campaign on a national scale are the American Federation of Hosiery Workers, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

Local unions and union officials are participating in Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and other cities. In New York good progress has been made in bringing the petitions into the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

But this is not enough, and very little compared with the possibilities of trade union support in the Herndon campaign.

It will be necessary to begin at once the development of this work, the broadening and activating of the united front on a local scale in every city, the setting up of "Free Angelo Herndon" committees in every city. These questions, of vital and immediate importance both in the Herndon campaign and the united front movement as a whole, will be discussed in the second part of this article.