

United Drive, Unequalled in Scope, Nets Million Signatures for Herndon

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While Judge Hugh M. Dorsey of Atlanta deliberates on his decision on the writ of habeas corpus for the freedom of Angelo Herndon, the broad united action for Herndon's defense, which has been developed, continues to grow. This movement, which has become symbolic of possibilities of unity in the labor defense movement against such infamous sentences as the 18 to 20 years on the chain-gang meted out to Herndon, against such repressive, union-busting laws as the Georgia insurrection law under which he was convicted, continues to penetrate new sections of all strata everywhere in the country.

One of the best reflections of this breadth of united action is seen in the campaign for two million signatures demanding that Angelo Herndon be freed and the insurrection law repealed.

The halfway goal in the Herndon petition drive has been reached. From wayside villages like Whitefish, Montana, and Truce, Kansas, from every great city in the country, from coast to coast, from Maine to Louisiana, and from thirteen foreign lands, names signed for the freedom of Angelo Herndon have come into the office of the Herndon Petition Committee. The broad united front of defense which these signatures, and the organizations which circulated them, represents, has had repercussions in quarters hitherto closed to the defense movement. The recent cross-fire between Governor Olson of Minnesota and Governor Talmadge of Georgia, Olson's statement that he would not debate Talmadge in Georgia because he might land on the

chain-gang with Angelo Herndon, Talmadge's answer that he still had the power to pardon Olson if he did meet such a fate, are eloquent proof of the deep impression that the campaign to free Angelo Herndon and in defense of our civil liberties and democratic rights, has made in the American scene today.

Petitions Tell a Story

The petitions themselves tell the story of the scope of the campaign. Some arrive carefully folded and wrapped. Others are brought in by workers, crumpled and creased from days spent in pockets. Many petitions are cut from working class newspapers and magazines which reprinted the original. Others are on ordinary sheets of note paper. A batch from Tacoma, Washington, came on penny post cards.

From the deep South there are 35,102 signatures — over 8,000 of them from Alabama — and 562 from Georgia.

Petitions received from the Socialist Party totalled nearly 16,000 names. The names came from 34 states. The topmost petition was from the City Hall of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, led off by the signature of Milwaukee's Socialist mayor — Daniel Hoan.

Trade Unions Active

Trade unions continue their activity in the Herndon campaign. A large bundle was sent in by Local 130 of the Progressive Miners of America, West Frankfort, Ill. A good number are from U. M. W. of A. members in Carnegie, Scranton and Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. I. L. A. locals on the West Coast set petitions. Those circulated by the

ers which officially endorsed the campaign, show clearly that the petitions were circulated by pullman porters among passengers on many trains. The Ladies Auxiliary of the Chicago division of that union is also participating in the campaign.

The Joint Board of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union of Baltimore, Md., composed of Local 4 cloakmakers, Local 106 dressmakers and Local 110 cutters, sent in petitions made out of the official stationery of the union. Every available inch of space, both sides of the sheets, is covered with names. Locals of the I. L. G. W. U. in New York City and Kansas City, Mo., have also sent in petitions.

The Maritime Federation of the Pacific, comprising twenty-four unions, has been active in securing thousands of signatures to the petition.

Croppers, Tenant Farmers Sign

The petitions have passed from shack to shack of the tenant-farmers of Arkansas, the share-croppers of Alabama, at each step gathering more signatures of these militant toilers as their unions pushed the campaign through thick and thin of their heroic strike struggles.

In Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, New York and many other cities, Herndon conferences have been held in which scores of trade unions participated. In every part of the country trade unions are pushing this campaign.

New York leads the country, with a total of 305,767 signatures well over the quarter of a million mark. It's nearest rival is Pennsylvania with 83,585, followed by Illinois

with 56,360 and California with 52,188.

Many of the petitions are accompanied by letters. Almost all of them apologize for only "doing as much as we could." Others enclose copies of letters or resolutions they sent to Governor Talmadge. One old man in Pittsburgh, in a clear but shaky handwriting, painfully copies out his whole long letter. It begins, "I am writing you this on Sunday, our Lord's day," and ends, "Oh, dear governor, have you a boy of your own? Think of the evidence in this case. The sentence is far too severe. Please pardon this young man and give him another chance and God will bless you and give you joy." Even the envelopes enclosing petitions indicate the extent of the campaign. Several have come from W. P. A. headquarters offices. Others carry the return address of the Unemployed Teachers Association and similar groups.

The very handwriting on these tens of thousands of petition lists has a story to tell. From the South comes list after list with just crosses on it, followed by carefully spelled out names of those who cannot write themselves. From New England come names that clearly number direct descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, written in careful still penmanship. From the coal fields there are signatures obviously written with stumps of pencils, while the writer leaned on his dinner pail or the wall of the mine tippie.

Many petitions were rushed from the bulletin boards of schools and colleges, with accompanying notes indicating that they had been Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Port-

signed by both students and faculty members. Among the educational institutions represented in the petition drive are Black Mountain College, Harvard University, Simmons College, Radcliffe, City College of New York, New York University, Cornell, Berkeley, University of Maine, Bishop College, Marshall, Texas, Milwaukee State Teachers College.

Settlement Houses Write

Madison House, one of the largest settlement houses in New York's congested East Side, sent several batches of completely filled in petitions as soon as they were removed from the bulletin board. So did the Recreation Rooms and Settlement, N. Y. C. and the Industrial Department of the Young Women's Christian Association of Buffalo, N. Y.

Several petitions came from hospitals. One was inscribed, "From the Patients and Nurses of the Charity Hospital, Breau Building, New Orleans, La." Another from a sanatorium for the tubercular in Liberty, N. Y.

Thirteen U. S. Congressmen, half a score of mayors of important cities, many State legislators, and one State governor — Olson of Minnesota, are among the leading figures whose names appear among the million on the petition lists.

It is encouraging to realize that we have come half way. But recent weeks are marked by a serious let-up in the intensity of the campaign. It is clear that the legal actions taken in the hearing on the writ of habeas corpus in Atlanta last week, have raised hopes that express themselves in a certain watchful waiting policy, rather than in

creased activities in the mass campaign.

The decision in the Herndon case has not been handed down. Angelo Herndon is now a prisoner in the dungeons of Fulton Tower. An unfavorable decision may mean his immediate removal from the jail to a chain-gang. We cannot allow our fondest hopes to reflect on the intensity of our fight to free him. Spurred on by the million signatures we have already gathered, we must redouble our efforts to complete our goal in less time than it took to collect the first million.

It has taken tremendous sums of money to conduct the legal defense of Angelo Herndon and the mass campaign, and large amounts are still needed to continue both. Together with the collection of signatures and other actions, collection of money, to be sent to the International Labor Defense, 20 East Eleventh Street, New York City, should go on.

Our vigilance must also express itself in continued protests and demands on Governor Talmadge for Herndon's freedom. Remembering the words of the pledge which thousands of workers solemnly took to Angelo Herndon before he surrendered himself to the Georgia authorities: "We will never cease working, night and day, north and south, to inform all toilers of this nation of your faithfulness and your courage, and to rally them in one great triumphant movement to set you free," our slogan must become: "No rest, no halt until the task we set ourselves is fulfilled — 2,000,000 signatures for the freedom of Angelo Herndon!"