

Herndon Can Still Be Saved from Chain Gang! Action Is Needed!

By ANNA DAMON

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Against one of the bravest, finest and most beloved workers in the United States—young Angelo Herndon—the highest court in the land has pronounced a sentence equivalent to the sentence of death.

The nine old men of the Supreme Court have spoken. They have decreed that Angelo Herndon, Negro youth, leader of starving Atlanta workers, must surrender himself on Oct. 24 to the lynchers of Georgia, who will clamp steel about his feet and drive him, shackled, to the Georgia roads. For 18 to 20 years, Herndon is doomed, by this decision of the Supreme Court, to endure the horrors and tortures of the chain-gang, whose overseers rival in brutality the worst fiends of the Spanish Inquisition. Let there be no mistake: this is not a sentence of years; it is a sentence of sure and certain death.

Has the Supreme Court spoken the last word in the case of Angelo Herndon? Will Herndon be tossed to the Georgia lynchers? No, the Supreme Court has not said the last word. That word belongs to the toilers of America, to the Negro and white millions in factory and farm, to the friends of the working class and the Negro people.

The Words of Douglass

Today, with the shadow of the chain-gang looming sharp and clear, we may well recall the words of Frederick Douglass, one of the greatest leaders of the Negro people. When the Supreme Court of another day handed down its infamous Dred

Scott decision, throwing the weight of law to the side of slavery, Douglass said: "We can appeal from this hell-black decision of the Supreme Court, to the court of common sense and humanity. You may close the ear of the Supreme Court to the black man's cry for justice, but you cannot, thank God, close against him the ear of a sympathizing world."

What can we, the people of America, do to save Herndon? How can we save him, at this eleventh hour, from the Georgia lynchers?

Governor Talmadge of Georgia now has it in his power to pardon Angelo Herndon. He has the legal right to exercise that power, at once, without an hour's delay, without waiting for the day when Herndon is to surrender to the Georgia authorities. To the many prominent people who have appealed to Governor Talmadge on Herndon's behalf, Talmadge has written that he will have the power to act when the case has left the hands of the Supreme Court.

Pressure on Talmadge

But if Governor Talmadge is now to be induced to exercise that power, he must be pressed and harassed unceasingly by the demands of millions. And there is a channel through which this pressure can be brought. There is in circulation a petition to the governor, asking Herndon's release. He must also be flooded with wires demanding that Herndon be set free.

Already half a million people—in

17 states of the Union, in nine foreign lands—have signed this petition. Our goal is two million names. The petition should speak to the highest official in Georgia in the name of two million people, crying: "Angelo Herndon must go free!"

I appeal to the members of the I.L.D., and to every friend of labor and of the Negro people, to lay aside everything else, and to work to the end of gaining two million signatures for these petitions by Oct. 24. Obtain the petitions at once; if they are not immediately available, write your own petition to Governor Talmadge and gather signatures to that.

Appeal to Workers

To the workers we appeal: take the petitions to the factories; to the unions, to fraternal organizations; go with them from house to house; explain to the people the danger that threatens us all if Angelo Herndon goes to the chain-gang of Georgia.

To the small business man we appeal: hang these petitions in your shop; talk the issue over with those who come to your place of business; get their signatures to the petition for the freedom of Angelo Herndon.

To the housewives we appeal: go to the market places, to the shops, and secure signatures for the freedom of Angelo Herndon.

We appeal to every person, white or black, who loves justice and hates cruelty and autocracy: go out on the streets, in the houses, in the churches, schools, clubs, wherever people gather, and secure the signa-

tures of all persons to the petition for Angelo Herndon.

I.L.D. Branches Called

To the branches of the I.L.D. we make a special plea: organize all your forces at once for a great drive to reach the goal of two million signatures for the freedom of Angelo Herndon.

And as quickly as the signatures are secured, rush them to the office of the Angelo Herndon Petition Committee, 80 East 11th Street, New York, so that they may be laid before the governor of Georgia.

Eight days in which to work, and only one quarter of our goal achieved! But if every member and friend of the International Labor Defense and of Angelo Herndon acts, if each secures but fifty signatures, we can still reach—and overreach—our goal.

Former Victory

The task of snatching Herndon from the chain-gang is now a race against time. Once before we raced with time and the Georgia lynchers for the life and freedom of Angelo Herndon—and won. When last August, Herndon was slated for the chain-gang, and the officials of the state of Georgia, thinking to make sport of the labor movement, set bail of \$15,000 in cash, that bail was subscribed and oversubscribed, in 23 short days. And on the very day when Herndon was slated to go to the chain-gang, he stepped out of Fulton Tower Prison, for the time at least a free man.

The victory achieved by the working class movement last year is the token of our strength. We can again snatch Herndon from the waiting chain-gang. But the time is short, the odds are very great. Today Angelo Herndon may well repeat the cry of Sacco and Vanzetti in the death-house in Boston: "Unless a million men can be mobilized in our defense, we are lost!"

The task can be accomplished, the victory can be won—but there is not a moment to be wasted.

Legal Steps Not Exhausted

The legal steps to win Herndon's freedom have not been exhausted. The I.L.D. is now taking last-minute legal action to snatch Herndon from the chain-gang. But the procedure is costly. And so once more we turn to our friends everywhere, and ask them to rush money to the Herndon Defense Fund, 80 East 11th Street, New York City, to make these actions possible.

To the governor of Georgia, at Atlanta, every friend of freedom should send a telegram or a special delivery letter, asking that he exercise his power to free Angelo Herndon.

Already, in the fight for Herndon, barriers of race, religion and political belief have been swept aside. Democrats and Republicans, Socialist and Communists, Negro and white, Jew and Gentile and atheist, have united in common struggle in face of a common danger. For if Herndon goes to the chain-gang, then the most fundamental rights

of the American people—the rights to organize, to assemble, to petition for redress of grievances—will have been dealt a terrible blow by the forces of reaction. The streams of protest must, in the case of Herndon, be poured into one mighty flood that will sweep away the menace of this chain-gang sentence and the sure death which it involves.

Seldom before has the need for action been so pressing; seldom has the time been so short. The few days left before Oct. 24 are crucial. At such a time as this, let no one stand aside!

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