

Reliance Placed in Mass Action By Marcantonio at Herndon Parley

The Daily Worker publishes below the text of the speech of Congressman Vito Marcantonio at the New York Herndon Action Conference held Saturday, Oct. 19.

At this conference, which was also addressed by Ashley B. Totten of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Mary Fox of the League for Industrial Democracy, the Rev. William Lloyd Imes, David Lasser of the Workers Unemployed Union, Lester B. Granger of the National Urban League, and others, the 264 delegates, sweeping aside every difference of race, color and political opinion, pledged an unending fight to free Angelo Herndon.

The full text of the speech follows:

Mr. Chairman, Angelo Herndon, Friends: During the closing weeks of Congress, Miss Damon, secretary of the International Labor Defense, came down to Washington on the Angelo Herndon case. And we started at that time to obtain a number of signatures from the members of the House and from the members of the Senate. I don't recall just how many signatures we



VITO MARCANTONIO

received but you can rest assured of one thing that that campaign for signatures down there will be kept on as part of the fight to free Angelo Herndon.

I realize that in this fight for the freedom of Angelo Herndon we are fighting the combined forces of the last vestiges of feudalism and the most atrocious forms of capitalism in America. We are fighting here race prejudice plus the bourbons and the reactionaries of America who are determined that labor, especially labor below the Mason and Dixon line, shall have no voice and show no protest so that to me Angelo Herndon symbolizes a cause. If it were just a fight of an individual I would not be interested, but freedom for Angelo Herndon represents the cause of the right of the American working class irrespective of race, color or creed, to protest, to demand and to agitate for a better deal in these United States.

So that I place the Angelo Herndon case in the same category with the Sacco-Vanzetti case, with the Gallup, New Mexico, case, a case which represents the struggle on the part of the American working class and, more particularly down

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South, a struggle on the part of the most down-trodden, the worst exploited workers in the United States. Now I don't know what Governor Talmadge is going to do. But I do know this, that if they think they are going to dismiss the protests of millions of people, many of whom are leading citizens in America, in the typical Southern bourbon manner, and forget about it, they are mistaken. Because as far as I am concerned, we are going to keep the Angelo Herndon issue alive on the floor of the House. (Applause).

I know that many of my colleagues from the South are going to reply that Congress has no jurisdiction. I will admit that. I know that they are going to say that this is purely a state matter. Legally they are correct, but I am going to maintain that the Congress of the United States and the House of Representatives is the greatest forum in the country and that as long as there are going to be bigots in any state, we are going to use that forum to fight those bigots. And just you wait when they come before us with the triple-eight program of appropriations next year. We are going to take the floor and we are going to bring in the Angelo Herndon case. The Speaker may call us out of order. He may say that our speeches are not germane but after all is said and done, he is going to get tired of calling us out of order.

Place Faith in Mass Action

My friends, that is the best that I can do from the House of Representatives. Whenever an appropriations bill comes up, when they allow general debate, when there are no restrictions, then you can talk on any subject you want, and we are going to take advantage of that. We are going to keep on talking on this question until the bigots of the South will know that there are some men in the House, and that the American people are aroused over the Angelo Herndon issue. Now then that is as far as we can go. But, friends, I have very little faith in legislative action. After eight months of futility and despair on the floor of the House of Representatives I have learned where to place faith. I place faith in the united action of the American workers. (Applause). There is only one manner in which Angelo Herndon can be saved and that is by mass actions. Today we resort to mass action in the form of petitions. If petitions fail, my friends, tomorrow we'll declare strikes wherever we can. (Applause).