

Horrors of Georgia Chain-Gang Vividly Portrayed in Pamphlet

**Labor Defender Editor
Makes a Personal
Investigation**

HELL IN GEORGIA. by Sasha Small, published by International Labor Defense. Price 2c.

Reviewed by
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THERE has been a good deal of publicity about Angelo Herndon and his pending 20-year sentence to the Georgia chain-gang, yet I have met men and women who simply do not believe that a sentence on the Georgia chain-gang for that length of time means death. I wish that these men and women would read the graphic portrayal of life on a Georgia chain-gang, that Sasha Small wrote, and which the International Labor Defense has just published.

Sasha Small, the able editor of the Labor Defender, personally went to Georgia to investigate conditions, to see for herself whether the stories I had told her on my return from my investigations of chain-gang conditions, or the reports that occasionally seep into the newspapers of barbarities enacted there are really as bad as portrayed. She found that newspaper dispatches and stories of the Georgia chain-gang were under-portrayed instead of exaggerated. What she herself witnessed, the tragedy of human life, living in cages fit for beasts, the tortures inflicted, are pictured with an extraordinarily vivid pen.

A Fulton County chain-gang prisoner, a Negro who had served eight years and four months tells how he feels. He told Miss Small:

"From the minute you get on the job till you quits for dinner you can't stop working, not for a second. Everything you do you got to call out to a guard. When the sweat gets running in your eyes and you're stinging like hot needles and you want to wipe it off your face you got to sing out, 'Wiping it off' right loud so the run-man can hear you before you dare to wipe it off your face. The same thing when you take a chew of tobacco. Even at night you can't do nothing without calling out to the guard. All night long you hear them calling 'Turnin' over.' Then the next day it begins all over again.

"If they ever get me agin, I'm



gonna make them kill me. It's better to be dead than livin' on a Georgia chain-gang."

I myself have heard Negroes say the same thing, and this statement gives one an idea of why the large number of Negro and white prisoners who, escaping from the chain-gang, prefer death to recapture.

THE appalling callousness of the Prison Commissioners of, "The three old men," as Miss Small calls them, to those who die, is one that should arouse the entire country. When Miss Small asked the Prison Commission how it happened that 103 prisoners died "natural deaths," the details of which consequently were not required, the prison commissioners, she writes, "shrugged their shoulders."

"The real reason," she says "must be looked for in the hidden unmarked graves of murdered men, their skulls crushed with pickhandles used by guards as clubs, now that the lash and whip have been officially abolished by executive decree, their bodies pierced by bullets from shot-guns and automatics which the guards never put down. The real answer is buried in the fear of those who still live on the Georgia chain-gang—fear that is nourished in their hearts every time they raise their eyes to stare into the muzzle of a gun and the cruel sneer of the man who holds it."

"The extraordinary fight which the International Labor Defense is

**Same Ghastly Fate for
Angelo Herndon If
Workers Permit**

carrying on to save Angelo Herndon from being sent to his 18 to 20 year sentence on the Georgia chain-gang, has more behind it than the life of Angelo Herndon, important as that life is. If Herndon goes back, he is as good as dead.

Herndon himself said in the court room when he faced the chain-gang sentence: "You can do what you will with Angelo Herndon, but there will come thousands of other Herndons. . . ."

This is quite true. Even if they succeed in killing Angelo Herndon, there will be thousands to take his place. Georgia does not fear Herndon as an individual. It fears what Herndon stands for—liberation of black and white workers from the control of those whom the prison

Commissioners represent.

The Herndon case is far too important for anyone—black or white—to ignore with a shrug of the shoulders, and a feeling that they are terribly sorry. If Georgia succeeds in doing to Herndon, what it wishes to do, it means that they will continue to do to other radicals first, then to the liberals and then to those conservatives whom those in power do not like. The extent of the barbaric system of cruelty in Georgia, in a state which presumably is a part of the U.S.A. is something that capitalist America will never live down.

When I finished reading Sasha Small's "Hell in Georgia," I could not help but wish that there was some way to raise enough money to enable the I. L. D. to print and get into the hands of every man and woman of the United States a copy of this pamphlet. That I know is too great a hope. The I. L. D. is poor. All of its energies are given to raising money to carry on the defense of Angelo Herndon, the Scottsboro boys, and other political prisoners. But a million copies of "Hell in Georgia" should be distributed throughout the length and breadth of this land. And if conservative, liberal, and radical, black and white, combine in the distribution of just such honest portrayals of conditions in this country, it will help a lot to stop Hell in Georgia, and prevent Hell in America.