

Smash the Southern Slave-Code!

THE most cruel and brazen violation of the most elementary political and human rights of the Negro people and the white toilers, has been again brought to light in the savage sentence imposed by the courts of the Georgia slave-drivers on Angelo Herndon, 19-year old Negro organizer of the Unemployed Council, the leader in the struggle against starvation in Atlanta.

In order to get rid of Herndon, the bosses have brought forward the old Georgia law of 1861, designed to crush insurrections. The law under which Herndon was convicted carries with it the death penalty. "Leniency" of the court consists in having the adopted state of President-elect Roosevelt, Georgia, sentence Herndon to death by torture on a chain gang instead of death in the electric chair. Seventy years after the Civil War, after the adoption of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the U. S. Constitution, supposed to destroy slave institutions, the ruling classes of Georgia are reviving the old code to crush the growing national liberation struggles of the Negro people. This in the year of 1933, in the year when our "liberal" President-elect Roosevelt is prattling about "a new deal." The old Georgia slave code—this is the "new deal" of President-elect Roosevelt and of his "enlightened" democracy! "The forgotten man" is to be found in the chain gangs of the second home state of the Warm Springs liberal.

The frame-up of Herndon takes place against a background of the most acute misery of the Negro and white toilers in the state of Georgia and throughout the South. Farms abandoned; thousands of workers walking the streets, jobless; relief cut off; over and above all this misery and oppression, the chain gang, the shotguns of the murder terrorists, and the lyncher's rope.

Into this situation came the Communist Party organizers with a clear call to resist starvation and oppression. They unfurled the banner of struggle for jobless insurance, for immediate relief to the unemployed, for equal rights for the Negroes and self-determination for the Black Belt. In the struggle for these demands, Negro and white organized together for the first time in Georgia and the South, realizing that this unity for struggle was the only way out of capitalist misery.

In the face of this growing resistance of the masses, the growing unity of Negro and white, the bosses were forced to grant some demands which cost money. They began to cast about for some means to crush this movement, which had become a thorn in the sides of the rulers, bent on carrying through their program of starvation and feudal oppression.

They sought to behead the movement. They determined to get rid of the leader of the unemployed, young Angelo Herndon. Thus this Negro lad was indicted on the basis of the old Georgia code, and forced to stand trial for his life.

These sinister intentions of the white rulers were openly admitted in the trial of Herndon. The crime the prosecution charged Angelo with was that he had organized Negro and white workers together in the struggle for relief; that, as a Communist, he had led a struggle for equal rights and the right of self determination for the Negro people.

In this cynical and brutal sentence of the southern slave drivers is involved the elementary rights for freedom of speech and assembly, the right to organize—of the workers and the Negro people of the South. The sentence against Herndon shows that the ruling classes will not hesitate to wangle in bloody dust these elementary rights in order to maintain the system of national oppression of the Negro people and the robbery of the white toilers.

Once again it is shown, as in the frame-up of the nine Scottsboro boys, as in the murderous terror against the Negro share croppers in Alabama, as in the case of the Atlanta six—Negro and white working-class leaders jailed on the same charge—as in the vicious sentences against the Tampa strikers, that ruling class justice in the South is slave justice, lynch justice, carried over and maintained as an integral part of imperialist rule.

The struggle for the freedom of Angelo Herndon is a struggle for the right to live of the toilers of the South.

The workers must answer this challenge by a mighty movement of protest and exposure, by a nation-wide campaign of mass action against the Georgia slave code, against the chain-gang system, and against the whole system of robbery and oppression of the white workers and the Negro masses.

The struggle for the release of Herndon must be made a focal point in the fight against lynch-terror in the South—for the freedom of the Scottsboro boys, the Tallapoosa share croppers, the Tampa and other prisoners of the white rulers. The broadest masses of the workers must be reached in this struggle. In all meetings of the workers, this question must be brought to the forefront. We must reach the masses in the reformist organizations, the American Federation of Labor, the Socialist Party, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and others, developing the whole movement around the slogans:

1. Immediate, unconditional release of Angelo Herndon.
2. Defeat the Georgia Slave Code of 1861.
3. The right of free speech, press and open meetings, and the right of Negro and white workers to organize together in struggle against starvation and oppression.
4. The right of the Communist Party and other working class organizations to legal existence.
5. Abolition of chain-gang system.
6. Unconditional freedom for the Atlanta Six!