

For Freedom's Cause

By Angelo Herndon

The Tories have had their breathing spell. The Supreme Court, in its haste to hoist the black flag of reaction over the American people, ran out of breath doing everything but declaring itself unconstitutional. And now, apparently to steal some thunder from the big supreme courtiers who slackened for a while, the little supreme courtiers rush in, do their work.

I have been ordered back to a Georgia chain gang for 18-20 years by the Supreme Court of that state which upheld the old slave insurrection law upon which I was indicted. And insurrection? Organizing white and Negro workers for the right to life, little enough to ask for in the southern slave belt where cotton choppers are mowed down on the picket line.

I had been snatched from the chain gang by the united efforts of all groups—Socialists, Communists, liberals, progressives—all liberty-loving people. That victory was a genuine and memorable triumph for freedom and democratic rights. There is perhaps no better example of the power of unity than this one which saved me. And now those unified forces must go back to battle with new strength and greater numbers.

For not only is this an immediate defense of all our democratic liberties, the rights of freedom of speech and assemblage; not only is it a fight to save me; the importance of the Angelo Herndon case is not so much what will happen to me personally. The important thing is the Georgia insurrection law which the state court has upheld in its decision, and the threat it holds for all labor organizations, all Negro people, and all progressive-minded individuals.

The last convention of the American Federation of Labor condemned the insurrection law which the lynch criers utilized to sentence me. The campaign for freedom today must go forward. The International Labor Defense has secured a stay of sixty days in which to appeal to the Supreme Court. Before that legal swamp of reaction moves on the matter, the voice of all America must be heard. Every individual, every organization, must make that voice stronger and louder by making protest actions immediately to Governor Talmadge of Georgia, the Georgia Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court. The campaign of the united defense committee must be supported at every turn. The battle lines have been drawn. In the shadow of Independence Day, the American people must again toll the bell for its hard-earned liberties.