

The Shame of America

One who was returned to freedom by the might of mass action calls on his friends and supporters to rally once again

By ANGELO HERNDON

When the history of the Scottsboro persecution and frame-up is written it will go down in the shame and infamy which it has earned for itself. On the other hand, the lessons of Scottsboro will be a medium through which will be cemented indestructible bonds of unity between Negro and white workers.

But, to hasten Scottsboro on into the chambers of horror, it must be placed there without the satisfaction of having devoured five of its victims—with little or no opposition. The floodgates of our indignation must be let loose in torrents of protests that will make Alabama retreat in its aim to commit mass murder.

Of all the inconsistencies, one might be prompted to ask: why have the authorities of Alabama for six years held all nine of the boys guilty of the crime of rape and now, as if by some stroke of magic, they suddenly decided that five of them are innocent? The answer is that they have known from the very beginning that all of the boys are innocent.

But, like a thief when caught in the act of committing some terrible crime, the authorities of Alabama have tried to wriggle out of a situation in which they have received scathing admonitions from the working class and prominent liberals. Yes, the whole world knows that the Scottsboro boys are not guilty. Nobody will be fooled by the insidious move of releasing four in order to murder the other five.

And that is what they thought they would like to do. If anyone doubts this statement let him examine what has happened to the remaining five boys since their trials in July.

Andy Wright, sentenced to 99 years, has been put to work sweeping the floors of Kilby Prison for 12 hours a day. That's back breaking work for anybody. It is especially serious for Andy because when he was first put on this job he had not yet recovered

from an operation and could hardly stand on his feet.

When Mother Wright finally wrested permission from the authorities to visit her son, a few weeks ago, he was still a very sick boy. She tried to see the others too. But that was not allowed because she was no "kin" to them. Andy told her though that Charlie Weems was still very sick in the hospital following an operation and Haywood Patterson too. Of Ozie Powell, he reported that hardly anything was left of him. He doesn't even recognize the Scottsboro boys.

In the case of Ozie Powell, Alabama has laid itself wide open for castigation. Ozie Powell was exonerated from all charges of rape and sentenced to twenty years for scratching Sheriff Sandlin's throat. The truth of the matter is that Ozie Powell, in almost insane desperation after more than five years of prison confinement, was provoked to defend himself from the taunts, jibes and physical maulings received from the hands of Sheriff Sandlin. Half of his brain was shot away—his whole body is practically paralyzed from the bullet that almost proved fatal to him. For this, Powell has been sentenced to twenty years.

But the greatest outrage of all was committed against Haywood Patterson—an outrage whose possible fatal consequences were prevented only by vigilant mass pressure. Without warning or notice to anyone, including his family, Haywood Patterson was transferred to a chain-gang on the Florida border of Alabama. To the same chain-gang where only two years ago another Negro labor prisoner—the heroic sharecropper Alf White was murdered. Haywood's life was in very real and serious danger. They thought

they could "finish" his case fast—the way they did Alf White's. But they reckoned without the eternal vigilance of the Scottsboro Defense Committee, the International Labor Defense and all the thousands of people who make up the Scottsboro defense.

Haywood Patterson is safe now—and back in the Jefferson County Jail in Birmingham Alabama.

That is where the other three boys want to go and where they belong pending the outcome of their appeals to the State Supreme Court. Clarence Norris has been there all along—another example of the "consistency" of the State of Alabama.

And that is where they can speedily be reunited if the mass pressure exerted in behalf of Haywood Patterson—to say nothing of the four who are free—will concentrate its forces on the Governor of Alabama demanding that he remove them from the misery of Kilby Prison.

Appeals are now pending in all cases. They will come up before the United States Supreme Court (in the Patterson case) in October and in the State Supreme Court for the others in November.

This is the time to impress upon the minds of Alabama's officials that the Scottsboro case is not finished, that the nation wide fight for these boys will end only when all of them are free.

The Scottsboro Defense Committee needs your help. It needs your assistance in establishing local Scottsboro Committees which will mobilize the public opinion in every locality of the country behind these boys. It needs your help in gathering signatures for the million signature petition to Gov. Graves.

Protest resolutions and telegrams must flood the offices of Alabama authorities demanding the freedom of the Scottsboro boys. Funds with which to continue the fight are also needed. Contributions can be made to the Scottsboro Committee, 112 East 19th Street, New York City.

It can be done. My freedom is proof of it, the freedom of four of the Scottsboro Boys is further proof—let's all get together for one final pull—so that victory may be ours, and the freedom they so richly deserve theirs, for the Scottsboro Boys.

HONOR ROLL

The Honor Roll of Mooney defenders grows. The following have formed a special American Committee of Liberals for the freedom of Mooney and Billings:

Sherwood Anderson, Gov. Elmer Benson, Rep. Usher L. Burdick, Humphrey Cobb, Sen. Royal S. Copeland, George S. Counts, Henry David, John Dewey, Edna Ferber, Rev. John Haynes Holmes, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, Robert Morss Lovett, Fredric March, Guido H. Marx, Alexander Meiklejohn, Sen. Gerald P. Nye, Rep. Caroline O'Day, Upton Sinclair, Rep. Wm. J. Fitzgerald.



From left to right: Mother Ada Wright, Ben Davis, Jr., Mother Viola Montgomery, and Mary Alice Montgomery. The picture was taken just as they stepped off the train in New York City to welcome their boys back to freedom.