



CHANGE THE WORLD!

By SENDER GARLIN

ONE Sunday morning, last April, I got off the train in Atlanta, Georgia. I had come from Decatur, Ala., where, a few days previously, Heywood Patterson had been sentenced to die in the electric chair by the "fair-minded" Judge James H. Horton.

In the Fulton Towers Prison in Atlanta was another Negro youth, convicted on an old pre-War Civil law passed to prevent slave insurrections. He faces an 18-20 year term on the Georgia chain gang. He is Angelo Herndon. His "crime" consisted in leading in the fight for relief for the unemployed of Atlanta.

Knowing how cool prison wardens are to representatives of the workers' press, I first went to the home of Ben Davis, Jr., the courageous Negro lawyer, who with his partner, John Geer, had defended Angelo Herndon and were carrying on the fight for his release.

It was Davis and Geer who first cut out the path followed in the Scottsboro fight. For it was they who boldly and for the first time in the deep South put forward the demand of the International Labor Defense for Negroes on the jury, bringing to the fore at the same time the whole issue of Negro oppression and the violation of the rights "guaranteed" the Negro masses by the Constitution of the United States.

Inside the Prison

WE SPENT about 40 minutes with Herndon, a 30-year old boy, who started life as a coal miner at the age of 13. Although kept in what was virtually a death cell for almost six months, Herndon's spirit breathed fire and enthusiasm for our movement. Whenever I have visited a class-war prisoner I have always gone away inspired by the zest and understanding shown by these workers—isolated as they are from the physical currents of the class struggle.

Herndon asked about the Scottsboro case, the tactics of the defense, the reactions of the workers outside. He asked about Tom Mooney, about the progress of the unemployed movement. He pleaded for books to read (he is given no work in prison), and when I left he eagerly took the magazines and newspapers which were sticking out of my pockets.

"You may do what you will to Angelo Herndon," the Negro organizer had thundered before a white ruling-class judge and jury, during his trial in Atlanta. "You may indict him. You may put him in jail. But there will come other thousands of Angelo Herndons. If you really want to do something about the case, you must go out and indict the whole social system. But this you will not do, for your role is to defend the system under which the toiling masses are robbed and oppressed."

Comrades! We must free Angelo Herndon. Think of it—18 years on a chain gang! He has already spent nearly two years in this Atlanta dungeon. Do you know how long 18 years is? Those of you who have paced up and down impatiently waiting for a subway or a street-car that was two minutes late in arriving—DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG 18 YEARS IS?

A Letter from Angelo Herndon

There is no doubt that an active, militant campaign for the release of Angelo Herndon has NOT been carried on. I am more convinced of this after reading this letter from Herndon:

Fulton Tower, Atlanta, Ga.

Dear Comrade:

Since getting out of solitary confinement I have been very ill. In fact I have been so weak until I could hardly pick up a book; and all of this comes as a direct result of my continued imprisonment, to say nothing of the tedious and excruciating days that I have been subjected to for 22 months.

I am suffering from constant violent pains in the stomach and incessant vomiting caused by intolerable prison food. Through this sickness I am gradually losing the sight of both eyes.

My being placed in the death house, where water and excrement dribbles all the time, is certainly enough to wreck my health completely; which the slave masters are very anxious to do. Possibly there is a certain amount of underestimation of the political essence of this point; not that I say everything isn't being done that can be done. But I do, however, say that that point as well as my whole case is not getting enough publicity.

For instance take Roosevelt's Health Resort at Warm Springs: certainly this could be made a real issue. On the one hand say, that the agents and representatives of the capitalists have all kinds of luxurious equipment for their health, and on the other hand, the working class fighters must lay behind filthy, grim and dismal walls of stinking capitalist hell holes, where their health is in imminent danger of being wrecked as well as the possibility of their lives being cast into the depths of capitalist infamy.

Thus I am convinced that this can be made a national issue as well as a local one. Meanwhile, it is also imperative that a fight be launched to force the lynch courts to record a speedy decision in my case, set me free and thus dispose of the case.

You must realize that I've been in here for a long time now, and as long as we let the case lag on, so much the better for the capitalists and their framers, of me. Keep them on a merry-go-round where they will be forced to keep their feet to the fire, and we can surely look for much more speedier action, with the resultant of some achievements that we might not have seriously anticipated.

My best regard to all,

I am your comrade,

(Signed)

ANGELO HERNDON.

Will You Remain Silent?

Support the I. L. D. in its fight for Angelo Herndon! Help intensify the campaign for his release! Free him before his health is completely shattered! And in the meantime, let him know that he has friends on the outside. Write to him and send him books. He craves for books on Marxian economics, on history and on literature. Books sent by an individual — how far, be accepted the prison warden who is, of course, none too eager to make Herndon's life agreeable in prison. Books must be sent him through the regular publication. Letters, however, can be sent him direct as follows: Angelo Herndon, Fulton Towers Prison, Atlanta, Georgia.

TOMORROW: "Who Said Farmers Were 'Conservative'?"