

A MESSAGE

From Angelo Herndon

**Written on the day he left for Georgia to
surrender himself to the authorities who
demand his life**

To all of you, members and friends of the International Labor Defense, who have shown your solidarity with me since the first day of my arrest, I want to send my greeting before I start for the Georgia chain gang. I will not say good-by because I have the greatest confidence in the masses of the people of this country, Negro and white, and I know that they will do all in their power to help win my freedom.

You who realize the conditions under which the workers in the South are forced to live and suffer, realize that this is not alone a fight to save the life of one individual, one person whose name is Angelo Herndon. This is a fight for the freedom of 14,000,000 citizens in this country, a fight for the right of the Negro people to be treated like civilized human beings. A fight to stop them from being trampled underfoot as they are today. You know that this is also a fight to wipe out a vicious unconstitutional law passed in the days of slavery and used to oppress the wage slaves of today; a fight to free 18 other men and women indicted and facing death under this same law.

Today when terror is slowly swallowing up the whole country, when fascism is showing its head in the United States, today is the time to act—if we are to save ourselves. If we allow this terror to grow without organizing to check it—there will be hundreds of Herndon cases in every state in the country.

The rulers of Georgia, think that by doing me to my death, they will halt the fight for freedom. They think that by sentencing me as they did, they will stop the millions of unemployed, Negro and white, from organizing together and marching side by side as we did in Atlanta, to demand bread. But we can and we must show them that they are

wrong. The Negro people, whose history is filled with many examples of courage, of willingness to die in defense of their rights, will unite—will organize together with the white workers and show the ruling class oppressors that the fight for Herndon is the fight for all the American workers.

We can already see that hundreds of thousands of American workers regardless of their political opinions, their religious beliefs, their race, their color, have realized this. A broad united front has been forged in the fight for my freedom. Past differences have been swept aside. And I know that the front will grow wider as the days go by.

No matter what our political opinions are, no matter what other differences there might be between us, we are all American workers and American citizens. We love this country because we have built it up. Our very blood, our very bones are in the soil and we are the ones who have made this country what it is. We are asked to believe that under the Stars and Stripes we are today a free people. But how can we believe it when men and women are thrown into jail because they ask for bread for their hungry children, when they are slugged and beaten because they strike for decent wages, when they are put behind the bars for exercising the rights of free speech. Through my case the State of Georgia has made it a crime punishable by death to read a newspaper or a book. If this goes unchallenged in Georgia it will soon be true in every corner of the country. This is not an isolated case. It is part and parcel of the whole system of reaction and terror that is developing at a tremendous pace in the United States today.

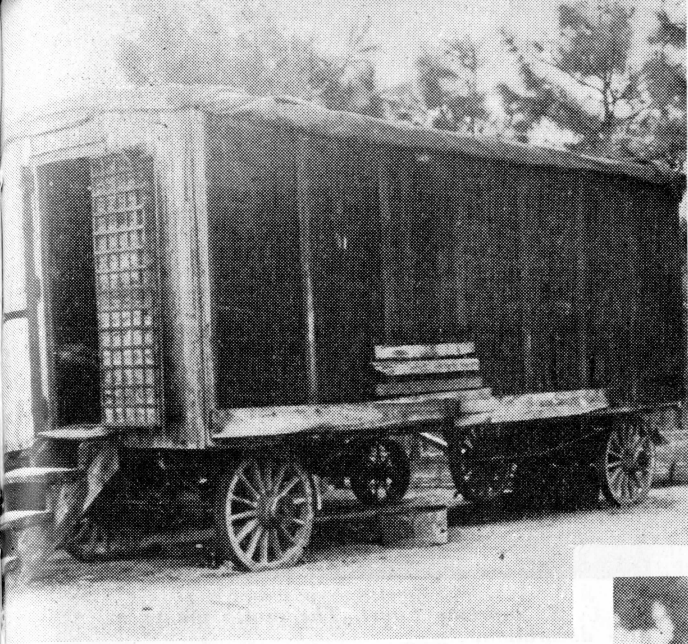
We have the power and the force to stop this wave. What we must do is

band our forces together into one fighting alliance of all workers, black and white, native and foreign born, and show our oppressors that we are fighting not only to free Herndon but to free ourselves. Too long we have permitted them to get away with their outrages. They murdered Sacco and Vanzetti. They have murdered hundreds of others. They have kept Tom Mooney in jail for 19 years. They will try to do it over and over again. But today our strength is greater than it was in those years. Let us put it together my friends, to defeat their plans.

I know that if I were humble and would get down on my knees in humiliation and beg for mercy, the rulers of Georgia would like it better. But before I would ever ask them for mercy that way I would rather die. There can be no greater honor than fighting for the freedom of the Negro people and for the freedom of the working class. If they should decide to take my life for doing this, let them understand that I would rather die fighting for what belongs to me and my class than to sit idly by while they trample my people underfoot.

And in my final words to you, I want to tell you that I know that it is the work of the International Labor Defense and those who support it, that has kept me alive these three and a half years since I was arrested. During these same years the I.L.D. has conducted many other defense battles and won many victories. The I.L.D. needs your support more than ever before, and you need the I.L.D. Help it to grow into the powerful defense shield it must become to prevent more Herndon cases, Scottsboro, Mooneys and all the rest. Join the I.L.D. today. One who has felt its power as I have, knows its worth and calls on you to swell its ranks.

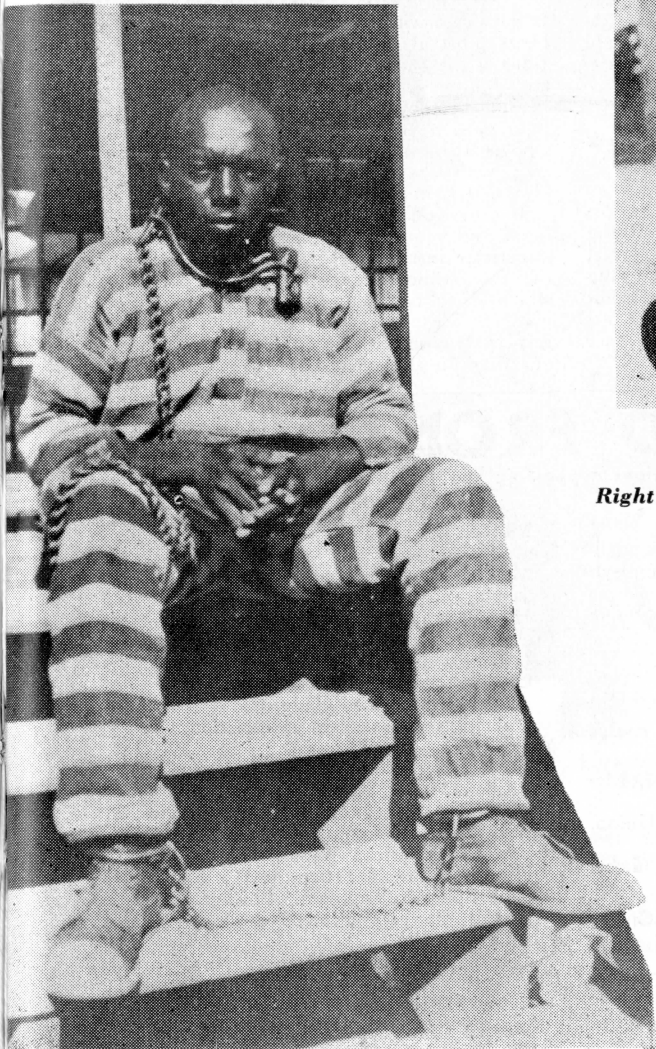
WHAT FACES ANGELO HERNDON?



*Left: The cage.
Right: Sunshine!*



Below: Chains.

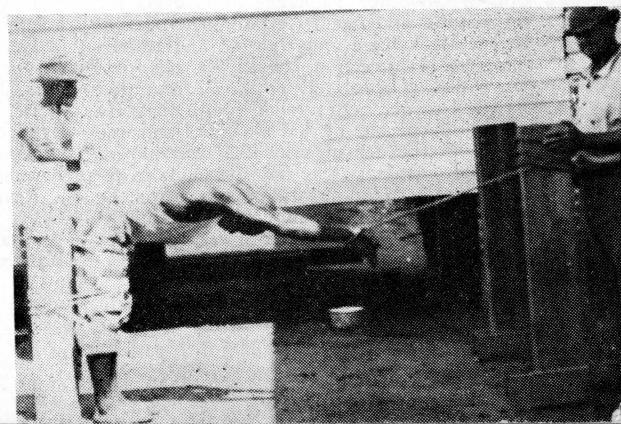


*Left: For being too sick
to work.*

*Right: Toil from sun up
to sunset.*



*Right: Punishment
—provided by law.*



ON A GEORGIA CHAIN GANG