

Georgia Bosses Hand Out a "Lenient Sentence"

By ANN BURLAK

THE state of Georgia came into the limelight in the spring of 1930 through its first attempt at revival of the century old slave law. At that time the Unemployed Councils and the Communist Party electrified the entire country with the tremendous unemployed demonstrations of March 6. It was the first time the unemployed workers demonstrated on an international scale and really forced the governments to admit that unemployment existed and was becoming a serious problem. It was the first time that unemployed Negro and white workers demonstrated together in Atlanta, Georgia.

It was on March 6, 1930, that the white rulers of Georgia opened war on the unemployed workers of Atlanta by breaking up the demonstration and arresting the leaders, M. H. Powers and Joe Carr. These workers were first charged with "disorderly conduct," but that was considered too mild a charge for workers who refused to starve. Then the ingenious Reverend Mr. Hudson, the assistant prosecuting attorney of Fulton County, brought down the century-old statute books and found the infamous slave law that has never been used since the Civil War. The law read, "Whoever shall incite an insurrection or revolt of slaves against their master or state is to be punished by death." After chattel slavery was abolished they left out the words "slaves" and "their masters."

ONLY one month later the Atlanta police raided another mass meeting of Negro and white workers and arrested four more militant leaders of working class struggles,

Herbert Newton, Henry Storey, Mary Dalton and Ann Burlak. All were charged with "insurrection." For two months these militant fighters were held in the Fulton Towers, because the state would accept no bail for their release. Meanwhile workers and various organizations all over the country raised a mighty protest against this vicious unprecedented attempt at legal murder, and this mass pressure forced the authorities to release these fighters, although on exorbitant bail.

Practically a year and a half later, Angelo Herndon, young Negro organizer of the unemployed, was arrested, and again the white rulers of Georgia used their old slave law to persecute a worker, who dared to lead a struggle against starvation and misery of all unemployed.

Herndon has been sentenced to a "Chain Gang Death" for 30 years. The prosecution openly stated that it was because Herndon is a Communist and a fighter that this vicious sentence was passed.

In a few days the other six comrades who were arrested in 1930 will be brought to trial before the same judge and on the same charge of "insurrection." They will also be sent to this vicious slow death.

The struggle for the freedom of Angelo Herndon and for the other six defendants is a struggle for the right to live of the Southern workers. We must organize a mass movement around the slogans: For the immediate abolition of the murderous chain gang system.

For the immediate release of Angelo Herndon, Herbert Newton, Henry Storey, M. H. Powers, Joe Carr, Mary Dalton and Ann Burlak.