

# Crawford Case A Classic of N. A. A. C. P Treachery

## “Defense Attorney Vies With State in “Proving” Crawford’s “Guilt”

By HARRY HAYWOOD

(Continued from Yesterday)

REPLYING to Helen Boardman's charges that he helped to send George Crawford to a life-term in the Virginia penitentiary, Charles Houston, attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, sinks still deeper into the mire of treachery. The theme-song of Houston's article in the **Nation** is this: "Crawford was guilty." Vying with the prosecution in diligence to produce evidence damaging to Crawford, Houston puts forward one argument after another to show that "Crawford is guilty." There was not time for



the NAACP defense to hunt up certain alibi witnesses for their client, but there was ample time for them to "discover" an abandoned set of Crawford's clothes in Washington, and to dig up a record of petty thievery for Crawford. With such energy on the part of the defense to convict a client, is it any wonder that the prosecution needed to go to very little trouble in the case?

Crawford had a record of previous offenses, said Houston. What does this prove? That Crawford is "criminally inclined," as Houston insinuates? No! It proves that Crawford is one more in that enormous number of Negroes persecuted by the police, picked up for any offense and none, hounded and driven by the agents of the ruling class. This petty persecution serves the purpose of keeping the Negroes in a state of terror and fear; it serves also the purpose of creating a background for future frame-ups against almost any Negro the state wants to hound.

Did Houston expose the real meaning of this "previous record" of Crawford's? No! Instead he used the previous persecution of his client in the way the lynchers use it—to help convict an innocent man. Houston did not even pursue the ordinary legal tactics of an ordinary lawyer in an ordinary case. He sat at the table of the defense, but his

heart and soul, his mind and his talents and his energies, were at the disposal of the prosecution, of the lynchers' courts of law.

To the suggestion that Negro witnesses against Crawford were under duress, Houston raises his hands in horror. Duress? Impossible! Who ever heard of a Negro being threatened, tortured, beaten, intimidated in the South? Who ever heard of anything but the most gentlemanly procedure between white police and detectives and Negro men and women? Preposterous!

So, when the case closed, an innocent Negro sat behind bars for life, all evidence having proved his innocence. Every opportunity to fight for the rights of the Negro people had been ignored, brushed aside. And in the face of this, Walter White, speaking in the name of the N. A. A. C. P., hailed the Crawford case as "one of the most distinguished victories for justice to the Negro yet won."

Is this the way the N. A. A. C. P. fights a new Dred Scott case? Is this the way the N. A. A. C. P. establishes a new "underground railroad" from slavery to freedom?

In the face of such treachery, many honest supporters of the N. A. A. C. P. have asked themselves the question posed by Helen Boardman in her article: "Is the N. A. A. C. P. retreating?" Miss Boardman also asks: "Has the South's best tool in establishing such a procedure (legal lynching) been the N. A. A. C. P.?"

To the second question, we may answer unhesitatingly, yes. But to the question, "Is the N. A. A. C. P. Retreating?" we give a different reply. No, the N. A. A. C. P. is not retreating. The treachery of the N. A. A. C. P. leaders in the case of George Crawford is but the logical climax to its treachery in the Scottsboro case and many other legal cases and other events. The treachery in the Crawford case is only the logical outcome of its whole theory, its whole policy, its whole basis of existence.

### The N.A.A.C.P. Repudiates Struggle

The N. A. A. C. P. is not retreating. It is going forward on the line of non-resistance to the white masters, to the white lynchers. It is going forward, inevitably, logically, inescapably, along the line of repudiating all struggle for the rights of the Negro people.

Says Houston: "Racial relations in Virginia were improved as a result of the trial." This sounds incredible. Yet Houston's statement is, in a certain sense, true. By helping to jail Crawford, by abandoning

all struggle for the rights of Negroes, the relations between the white lynch-rulers and their Negro lieutenants—such as Charles Houston and other N. A. A. C. P. officials—were considerably improved. How could the lynchers of Virginia fail to appreciate the contrast between the suave and polite behavior of Houston and the behavior of the attorneys for the Scottsboro boys?

The lawyers of the I. L. D., had no regard for the feelings of the lynch-courts. They were determined to free the boys; they were determined to expose the whole monstrous frame-up and the basis for it; they were determined to fight for every right that the state of Alabama had denied to the Negro people. The defense of the Scottsboro boys was neither suave, nor polite, nor considerate of the feelings of the lynchers. The defense

of the Scottsboro boys was a battering ram against the ancient walls of discrimination and oppression. The attorneys in the Scottsboro case, following the policies of the I. L. D., knew that they could gain nothing unless Scottsboro became a rallying cry for millions throughout the world struggling against oppression.

### Reward for Treachery

The lynch-rulers of Virginia were delighted with the contrast presented by the attorneys for the Crawford defense. They took Houston and his aides to their bosom. If we leave out of account the starved share-croppers and tenants and plantation workers of the Virginia farms, the sweated workers in Virginia's mills and mines, the Negro unemployed, the victims of Virginia's jails—then we may truly say with Houston that "racial rela-

## Saved By Workers, Victory Joins Fight on Lynch Courts

DETROIT, Mich., July 9.—James Victory, Negro worker recently acquitted on a charge of assault through the efforts of the International Labor Defense and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, has just issued a statement regarding his arrest and acquittal.

The statement follows:

"I was framed because I am a Negro. I was freed only because the International Labor Defense and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights mobilized thousands of Negro and white workers, who fought shoulder to shoulder in my defense.

"My case is another Scottsboro case. It grows out of the terrorization and slave-driving of the Negroes by the ruling class. Just as the I. L. D. has fought to save the lives of the nine innocent Scottsboro boys, so they fought and won for me.

"I appreciate the splendid work of the I. L. D. and the L. S. N. R. as well as that of the able attorneys headed by Maurice Sugar in behalf of myself as well as the entire Negro people. I thank all those Negro and white people, who so quickly came to my defense.

"What happened to me, might happen to any Negro. I am going to speak under the auspices of the International Labor Defense and the League of Struggle for Negro



JAMES VICTORY

Rights, and tell my story.

"I have joined the International Labor Defense. I am asking all my friends and all the Negro people to join me into the I. L. D., as this is the only way to successfully defend the rights of the Negro people.

"(Signed) JAMES VICTORY."

## Co-operation of NAACP Lynchers Welcome Fine Leaders

tions in Virginia were improved as a result of the trial."

Says Houston: "For Crawford to have demanded a second trial in order to challenge the jury issue would have put him in the position of not letting well enough alone." A life sentence—well enough! The conviction of an innocent man—well enough! An all-white jury to sit on the case—well enough!

"It would," Houston goes on to say, "have taken him off the defensive and placed him on the offensive against the county. The law itself, the very existence of the N.A.A.C.P., is that the Negro can gain full citizenship and equal rights only with the cooperation and good-will of the dominant majority. The problem before the N. A. A. C. P. was not simply to force the issue, but to force it in such a way as to provoke the minimum amount of resistance." (My emphasis—H. H.)

"Let the Lynchers Be"

And there's the kernel of the matter. There's the basis of the policy of the N. A. A. C. P. No offensive against the lynchers. No offensive against the system of Jim-Crowism. Cooperation with the dominant majority—that is, with the white rulers. Do not struggle, do not raise your voices in protest. Join hands with the white rulers. Depend on the courts—even though these are the courts of the lynchers. Depend on the judges—even though they wear beneath their official robes the regalia of the Klan. Do nothing to disturb the relations between master and servant, oppressor and oppressed.

For the N. A. A. C. P. represents that small group of Negroes who live well by virtue of segregation. To the Negro real-estate dealer, Jim Crowism is salvation, a means of livelihood. To the Negro insurance broker, the policies of the white insurance companies give him a path to wealth. Within the Jim-Crow confines, within the walls that hem in the Negro millions and keep them in untold suffering, the Negro upper class grows rich and fat. To this group, Jim-Crowism is the breath of life. Then why attack it? Why abolish it? Why not do everything to continue it in power, regardless of the agonies of the Negro workers and farmers to whom Jim-Crowism is a crushing burden?

(To be Continued)