

PATHFINDER

May 22, 1937: p. 5

Jim Crow

About 100 years ago, a popular Negro minstrel named T. D. Rice made a hit with a song carrying the refrain:

"Wheel about and turn about and jump, Jim Crow!"

Before long, "Jim Crow" had become Southern slang for Negro. It was but a short step to the practice of referring to the segregation of colored folk from whites in public places as "Jim Crowism."

Today Jim Crowism obtains to some degree in every one of the Southern states. Separate sections in trolley cars and special coaches on trains are provided in which Negroes must ride. In Catholic churches below the Mason-Dixon line, colored communicants are generally seated in pews apart from white people; in most Protestant churches they are excluded entirely. Even as far north as Washington, D. C., Negroes are not allowed in the big movie theaters and restaurants.

Last week Representative Arthur W. Mitchell of Chicago, only Negro member now in Congress, announced he was suing the Pullman Company and the Illinois Central and Rock Island Railroads for \$50,000 because he had suffered "humiliation and inconvenience" when he was ejected from a Pullman car while en route to Hot Springs, Ark., last month.

Representative Mitchell was born in Alabama. After graduation from Tuskegee State Normal and Industrial Institute there, he studied law at Harvard and Columbia. He was admitted to the bar in Washington, D. C., where he practiced ten years. In 1935 he was elected Representative from the First Illinois District in Chicago to succeed Oscar De Priest, also a Negro.

Filing suit last week, Mitchell alleged that a conductor "did threaten to have the plaintiff arrested by police officers and did abuse and call this plaintiff vile names, which said vile names are too opprobrious and profane, vulgar and filthy to be spread upon the records of this court." The Congressman told reporters that the conductor had warned him: "If you don't get off this Pullman car and back into the second class coach, I'll stop the train and have you locked up." He said that conditions in the Jim Crow car in which he was forced to ride were "filthy beyond belief."

"This is the first gun in a campaign . . . to clean up the Jim Crow cars in the South," Mitchell declared. "I am not aiming at all railroads—just those which operate dirty, filthy equipment my people are forced to ride in."

OldMagazineArticles.com