

VI - 73 D - 64. "White Author Indignant Over Southern Prejudice"
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White author indignant over southern prejudice

By Verna Arvey for CNA

Soon after the publication of her forthright book, "Battle Hymn of China", Agnes Smedley went on a three-week's lecture tour of the South. She has just returned from that tour, indignant over Jim Crow which, she declares is "simply a horror for anyone who claims to be human," full of praise for the many Southern white liberals who told her how depressed and miserable they are over the whole situation and scornful of the mean, petty white Northerners who adopt Southern homes and become more Negro-hating than many Southerners. She heard white Northern women living in the South call colored people "niggers" and speak of them as if they were half-human. "There seems to be a vast mass of white people who need to have some human creatures lower than themselves", the author commented in an exclusive interview with me.

The thoroughness with which the average Southern white bus driver takes it upon himself to enforce the doctrine of white supremacy also came in for some caustic comment. Miss Smedley mentioned the time in Louisiana when a bus on which she was riding was about half full. It was pouring rain. As usual, three-fourths of the bus seats were reserved for white people. The colored people had to sit in the back and could not even rest in the empty seats reserved for the whites. They had to stand in the aisle. Once the bus stopped while the driver told some colored people who had sat down in the empty seats reserved for whites near the colored section, to stand up. Those that sat, sat on the edges of the seats, watchful and fearful. One white-haired colored woman leaned on the arm of an empty seat next to which a white woman was seated near the window. The white woman had no objection to the old colored lady and obviously wished to ask her to sit down. But the bus driver stopped and commanded the old lady standing to remain standing.

Again the bus stopped to take on half a dozen colored men and two women. The bus driver swung the door open and told the colored men and to stand back and let the white people on first. The women got on, whereupon the driver perceived that they were Negroes. He slapped his knee and turned to the white passengers near him and said, "Gol darn good joke on me! I thought they was white and they're niggers."

FACES FROZE

Miss Smedley reported that the faces of the colored people froze. She turned and saw the two women take their places, standing in the aisle, though seats were empty. The driver saw her watching the whole scene and glanced contemptuously at the white author, and at the next stop, left his seat, came up near her, laughed hatefully in her face, and hitched up his trousers with a "that's how we treat 'em down here" expression.

The finest thing Miss Smedley saw in the South happened when a white soldier on a bus took a seat and motioned to a standing colored soldier to take the adjoining seat. The colored soldier did. The driver stopped the bus and commanded, "Stand up, nigger!" The soldier stood up. The white soldier exclaimed,

Dewey told he aided race haters

NEW YORK — Negro citizens were "keenly disappointed" in his statement endorsing a "states' rights" soldier vote bill, Governor Thomas E. Dewey was told this week by the NAACP, because it "gave enormous aid, comfort, and prestige to the persons who had unashamedly exploited violent anti-Negro sentiment in supporting their side of the argument."

After recalling the race-hating speeches of Rep. John E. Rankin and Senator James O. Eastland, both of Mississippi, declaring the states' rights vote bill was necessary to maintain white supremacy, the NAACP letter declared:

"Many opponents of a federal servicemen's ballot took no pains to conceal the low and bigoted plane upon which they were basing their opposition. It is greatly to be regretted that your statement on this legisla-

"Aw, Hell!" and stood up in the aisle with the colored soldier.

Some of the newspaper items that came to Miss Smedley's attention in the South were the ones from the paper in San Antonio, Texas, about a colored soldier who was sentenced to 10 years in the penitentiary for killing a bus driver who had kicked him; and the ones from papers in Georgia telling of a Negro who was sentenced to 10 years' hard labor for stealing half a chicken and three sandwiches, and a Negro woman given several years' imprisonment for stealing a pair of shoes.

White southern liberals gave the author startling facts on sharecropping and on educational facilities for colored people. The obvious concern of these white liberals is to Miss Smedley one of the most heartening aspects of conditions. Another interesting development is the Farm Union of the South, an organization comprising both white and colored. In a recent conference, these people decided to investigate means of emigration to various parts of Latin America and to Australia.

Miss Smedley spoke of the sacrifices of colored people in the South, then recommended that night classes and discussion groups should be founded all over the country. "We can't treat men like dogs and then expect them to act like men," she concluded.

Let us recognize the beauty and power of true enthusiasm; and whatever we may do to enlighten ourselves or others, guard against checking or chilling a single earnest sentiment.—Tuckerman.

tion should have placed you in such company."