

VI - 73 D - 71 B. "I Passed Through The South Like A Traitor" - By Florence
Murray - People's Voice - September 9, 1944.

TOWN HALL

People's Voice - Sept. 9, 1944

'I Passed Through the South Like a Traitor'

By FLORENCE MURRAY

Senator Gibson of Georgia did the country a great favor in reading into the "Record" last week on the Senate floor a long letter published in the Afro-American, in which a white educator related the experiences of her visit in Louisiana. The letter is one of the strongest indictments against the reactionary white South and one of the most poignant of any writer during recent days.

It was not written to the editor of the paper in which it appeared, but to a friend, who evidently sent it to the newspaper. The Senator, in presenting the letter, did so in an effort to damn the paper, the woman, and any one who dared have the same opinions or feel the same emotions.

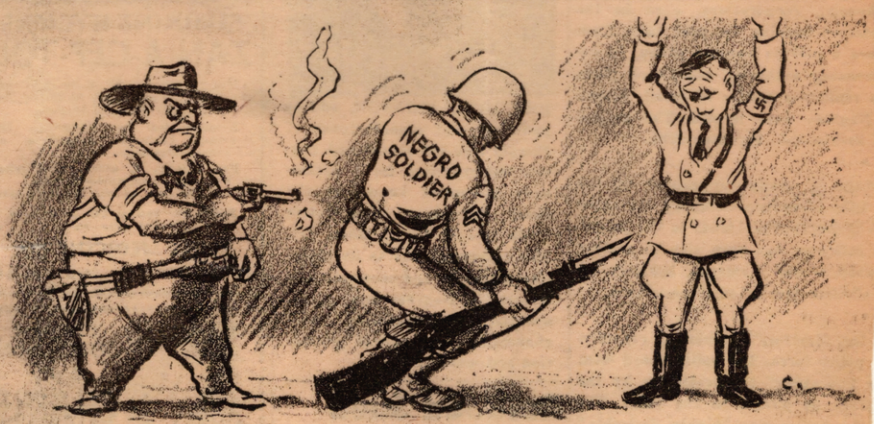
"To her, or the author, whomever he may be," the Senator raved at the conclusion of his reading of the communication, "I return the challenge and say damn you and your dastardly existence in this land of liberty and glory" (bold face ours.)

The letter, signed "Agnes Smedley," told of teachers receiving \$3 a month salary; of children having to walk six miles to school; of the school she visited which had to shove bookshelves around to prepare a makeshift assembly room; of white bus drivers making Negro soldiers stand up in buses, contrary to law; of bus drivers insulting colored women and men, and insulting her for daring to display a facial expression sympathetic to Negroes.

Here are a few excerpts from her letter:

"I saw colored people standing in the isles in buses when half the white sections were empty and I heard colored people called 'niggers' as a curse word. As I went into our bus stopped to take on a group of six colored men and two white women. The women were simply and tastefully dressed, and their faces were intelligent and sensitive. The bus driver threw open the door and said: 'You niggers stand back and let the whites on first.'

"As the women got on, by some means the driver saw they had colored blood. He slapped his thigh and roared with laughter and turned to us white passengers and said: 'Ain't that a good joke on me? I thought they were



Is Senator Gibson and his ilk for democracy or Hitler, as illustrated in the above drawing by PV's artist?

white, but they're niggers.'

"Now, when I heard this I should have stood up and killed the driver. But I sat there, petrified; sat there like a traitor to the human race. I kept thinking what Jesus would have done, and knew that He would perhaps have allowed Himself to be killed. I didn't. I didn't do a thing for many reasons: because I had been warned a dozen times by white people that if I did anything it would be the colored people who would suffer for it."

"I passed through the South like a traitor."

The writer, whose sympathy, liberality and reason were probably pressed beyond endurance at the tragic conditions she found, then wrote these words:

"~~C~~ those white southerners! I've never seen such savagery in my life as in the South. I returned here with the belief that a day of reckoning is coming, and I told my friends that I was willing to have another civil war and to break the bones of the South, bone for bone."

Now, what did the Senator from

Georgia have to say about these criminal and inhumane southern practices? Here are some of his words:

"I regret to have to stain the pages of the Record of this body with the language of this moral leper, but if the United States will permit such to be carried through the mails and distributed to the people of this great commonwealth, then I expect to expose its filth to the decent law-abiding citizens who have no opportunity to see this slander sheet (referring to the newspaper) and to become fully informed of the works of those who would destroy the DEMOCRACY that shields them"—(capitals ours.)

"She is a traitor. A traitor to every true American, a traitor to all the blood that has ever been spilled to save our flag, a traitor to every boy, white and black, who fights in blood, smoke and mud on the battle fronts that such a human carcass as she may enjoy the liberties and blessing of a FREE land to which she is not worthy"—(capitals ours.)

"She constitutes a portion and arm of Sidney Hillman's communistic gang, and this is part of their pat-

tern of dividing our people to whom they can install their system of slavery for both whites and blacks in lieu of our DEMOCRACY"—(capitals ours.)

Commenting on another portion of the letter in which the writer said that the members of the faculty of a colored school she visited were afraid to invite her to have luncheon with them, the Georgian purist said: "She is flattering herself. My opinion is that Negroes have more respect for themselves than to want to associate with her. They had to know that her only purpose was to destroy them and to try to bring them into hatred."

"The most vicious thing she did was to use the name of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of Mankind," he said in his religious fervor. "She would break the bones of the South, one by one. From her own words. I presume she would crawl, as the slimiest serpent of the waters, into the watery grave of Colin Kelly and crush his bones."

Senator, how about the watery graves of Messman Dorie Miller, of Seaman Leonard Roy Harmon, of Air Pilot Paul C. Mitchell, and Pvt. Robert Brooks?