

# Heywood Broun Defends Attitude Of New Negro

## Claims Negro Woman Led Way Toward New Freedom For Servants

WASHINGTON, July 25.—(C. N. S.)—Heywood Broun, noted columnist, whose recent article on the admission of Alonso Parkham to West Point appeared in the Scripps-Howard newspapers throughout the country, attracting wide attention and much comment, again takes the Negro for the subject of his column "It Seems to Me" and creates a sensation by his defense of the new Negro:

"It is quite beside the point to ask a colored man of our generation to behave as if he belonged to a social order which has entirely passed away," he states, commenting upon the mournful attitude of the South towards the passing of the old line Negro."

With surprising discernment he warns: "Please do not be particularly patient with any Southerner who tells you that it is monstrous to charge him with unfairness toward the Negro and that the disproof of any such assertion lies in his fondness for his old mammy. \* \* \* You simply cannot get a Southerner to think realistically about any question which concerns the Negro. Drive him into a hole in an argument and he will seek refuge from the facts by telling you how much he loved the Negro mammy who nursed him when he was a child."

The article, inspired by the moans and lamentations concerning the passing of Jim Swift, family retainer, follows:

"The leading editorial in an Alabama newspaper recently was given over to high praises of a colored citizen of the town. The article mourned the passing of Jim Swift, born a slave and all his life the servant of the Mallory family. And the editor could not resist the temptation of rounding off the tribute with a few mournful remarks about modern Negroes, who seemed to him not the least like Jim Swift. Even the New York Times, which quoted from the Selma (Ala.) Times Journal, added at least a hint of misgivings on its own account about the passing of a type."

"There is," said the Times, "a large body of opinion among both Negroes and whites which, admitting the rare virtues of Jim, is still unable to lament the passing of a purely servant type as the only Negro unit. They ask why any race should always be in servitude, however much appreciated. It is true that they offer the aspiring Negro little more encouragement than a theory of his equality, but they have induced him — for benefits not yet made clear — to look down on such men as Jim Swift of Selma."

"The Times, of course, is an organic whole, and its editorial page speaks for the organization and not an individual, and yet it is not impossible in this case to see through the anonymity and bet with comparative certainty that the man who penned the comment came from below the Mason and Dixon line. I'll devour an entire first edition—week day, of course—if I'm wrong. The attitude is so wholly characteristic of the South. You simply cannot get a Southerner to think realistically about any question which concerns the Negro. Drive him into a hole in an argument and he will seek refuge from the facts by telling you how much he loved the Negro mammy who

nursed him when he was a child.

"Or there will be words of fervent praise for some old butler who remained with the family for 50 years. Now, in all reason, is there any sense or justice in asking the modern Negro to emulate Jim Swift and others of his type? I will not deny that there may have been many fine factors in days which are gone. The white folks sat in the porch, and Sam came out with juice. "Yes, Suh," said Sam, with one hand on his kidneys to denote age and fidelity. At least, that is the way it is done in plays. "How are you, Sam?" said the quality folks, and there was good will all around."

"But the Negro of today couldn't be old Jim Swift of Selma, even if he wanted to. It is quite beside the point to ask a colored man of our generation to behave as if he belonged to a social order which has entirely passed away. One might as well say to Alonso Parkham: 'You have no business going to West Point. It ought to be your ambition to be a faithful Negro butler.'"

"In 50 years the South has changed out from drummer boy to brigadier, and while this process of transformation was going on how would anybody expect the Negro to stand still, hat in hand, awaiting "Massa" at appropriate intervals?"

"Please do not be particularly patient with any Southerner who tells you that it is monstrous to charge him with unfairness toward the Negro and that the disproof of any such assertion lies in his fondness for his old mammy. After all, even in the

old days a very small percentage of the Negroes in the South were engaged in domestic service, and the man who pays hearty tribute to Jim or Sam or Aunt Sally is merely testifying that he has good will to a tiny proportion of an entire race."

"The South would like to have the Negro maintain a good humored servility toward the white man. If this condition still existed there would be no need of laments and fulminations. Yet why can't the Southerner see that this condition is impossible much as he would like to have it? The Negro who goes into a profession or industry is no longer dependent upon the bounty of some single white master, and he would have to be a histrionic genius to simulate the adoring attitude of old Jim."

"A certain number of Negroes remain in domestic service, and it has never seemed to me that the job of being a servant was fundamentally ignoble in itself. But there was need of readjustment and in New York, at any rate, it has been the Negro who has been chiefly responsible for raising the standard. Grand Nedra worked as a cook and maid under conditions which a woman from Harlem would not tolerate, even though she were starving."

"Of course, certain worldwide economic currents have been responsible for the creation of a living wage in domestic service. But it is the Negro woman who has led the way in winning the new freedom for the servant. She has insisted that when her job was done she would go back to her own home and return the next morning. Not for her the rent free room, with its obligation of being on constant call to perform some task or other while she was resting. Even at great financial sacrifice colored servants have held to this essential innovation."

"It is this factor which has restored self-respect to domestic service, for no man or woman can have proper pride in any job unless at some point during the day or evening it is possible for him to stretch his back above his head and say, 'Goodly work, until tomorrow. I'm going home.'"