

THE TWENTIES IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

Eighteen political cartoons examining the racial issues confronting black and white Americans in the 1920s—the “race problem”—appear on the following pages. They were published in general circulation (white-owned) and African American newspapers from 1919 to 1928. [Virulent racist depictions from the period are not included in this collection.]

To analyze a political cartoon, consider its:

- ❑ **CONTENT.** First, basically describe what is drawn in the cartoon (without referring to the labels). What is depicted? What is happening?
- ❑ **CONTEXT.** Consider the timing. What is happening in national events at the time of the cartoon? Check the date: what occurred in the days and weeks before the cartoon appeared?
- ❑ **LABELS.** Read each label; look for labels that are not apparent at first, and for other written content in the cartoon.
- ❑ **SYMBOLS.** Name the symbols in the cartoons. What do they mean? How do they convey the cartoon’s meaning?
- ❑ **TITLE.** Study the title. Is it a statement, question, exclamation? Does it employ a well-known phrase, e.g., slang, song lyric, movie title, radio show, political or product slogan? How does it encapsulate and enhance the cartoonist’s point?
- ❑ **TONE.** Identify the tone of the cartoon. Is it satirical, comic, tragic, ironic, condemning, quizzical, imploring? What adjective describes the feeling of the cartoon? How do the visual elements in the drawing align with its tone?
- ❑ **POINT.** Put it all together. What is the cartoonist’s point?

QUESTIONS

- ❑ How did general circulation and African American newspapers differ in interpreting the “race problem”?
- ❑ How did each view the role of citizens, states, and the federal government in addressing the “race problem”?
- ❑ Which cartoon would you select as the most successful in delivering its point? Why?

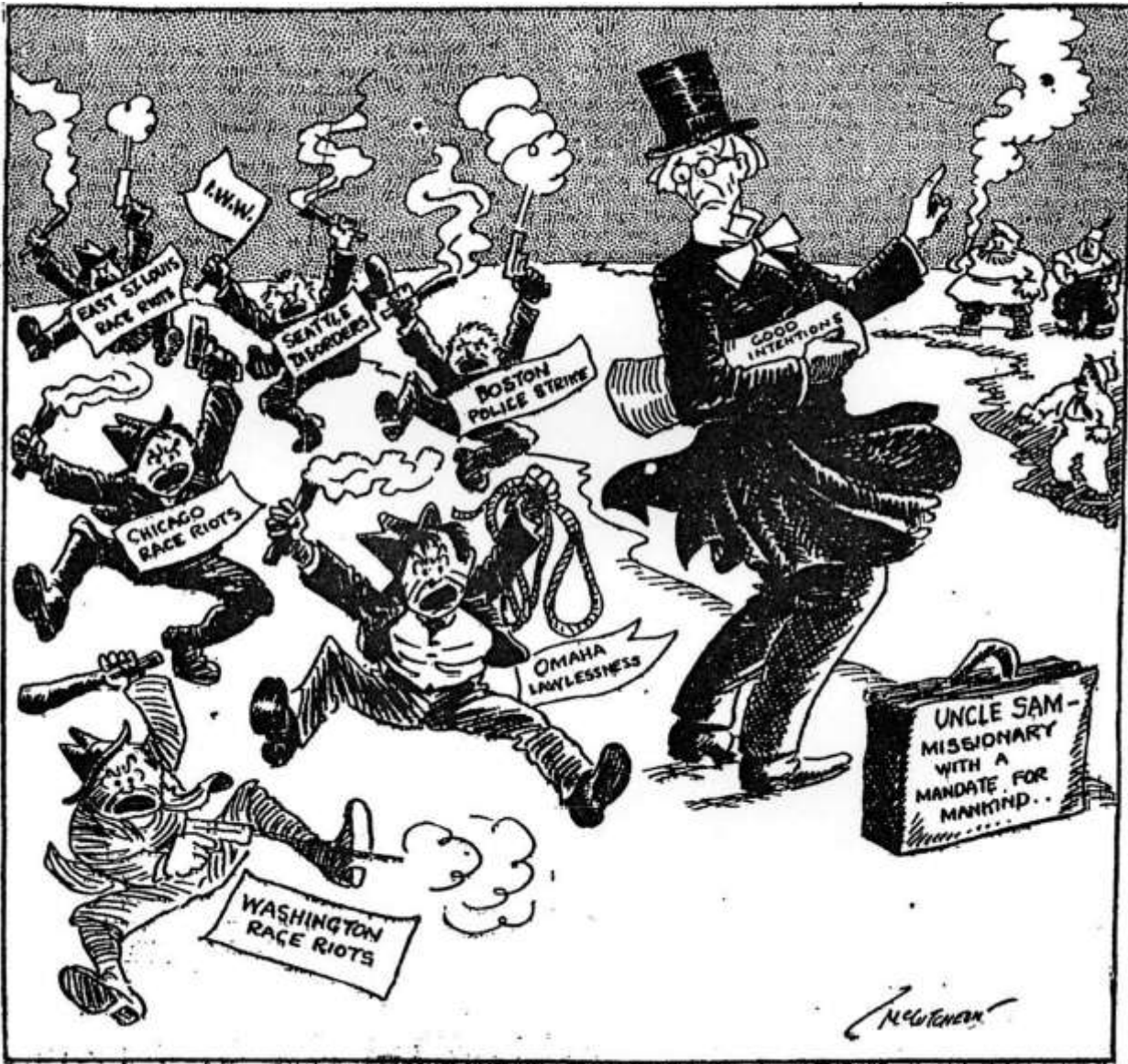
RACE



“The U.S. Constitution Will Soon Be Bobtailed”
The Afro-American, Jan. 18, 1924



“Their Christmas Tree”
Judge, ca. Dec. 1922



“The Missionary’s Sons”

Chicago Daily Tribune, September 30, 1919

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

I.W.W.: International Workers of the World

East St. Louis race riots: May/July 1917

Chicago race riots: July/August 1919

Washington [DC] race riots: July 1919

Boston police strike: Sept. 1919

Omaha lawlessness: Sept. 1919

The three figures on the European continent are caricatures of a Russian, a Greek, and a Spaniard, probably referring to the Russian Revolution and civil war, the Greco-Turkish War, and the 1919 Barcelona workers' general strike

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“They’re Learning”

New York World, September 30, 1919

Cartoonist: Rollin Kirby

Lenine: Vladimir Lenin, Bolshevik leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution.
Omaha, Nebraska, race riot, Sept. 28-29, 1919.

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“At the Other End of the Lyncher’s Rope”

Des Moines Register, Iowa, September 30, 1919

Cartoonist: Jay N. “Ding” Darling.

While the sketch quality of the image suggests the cartoon was not published, it did appear on the front page of the Sept. 30, 1919, edition of the *Des Moines Register*.

Reproduced by permission of the Jay N. “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society. Digital image courtesy of the University of Iowa Libraries.



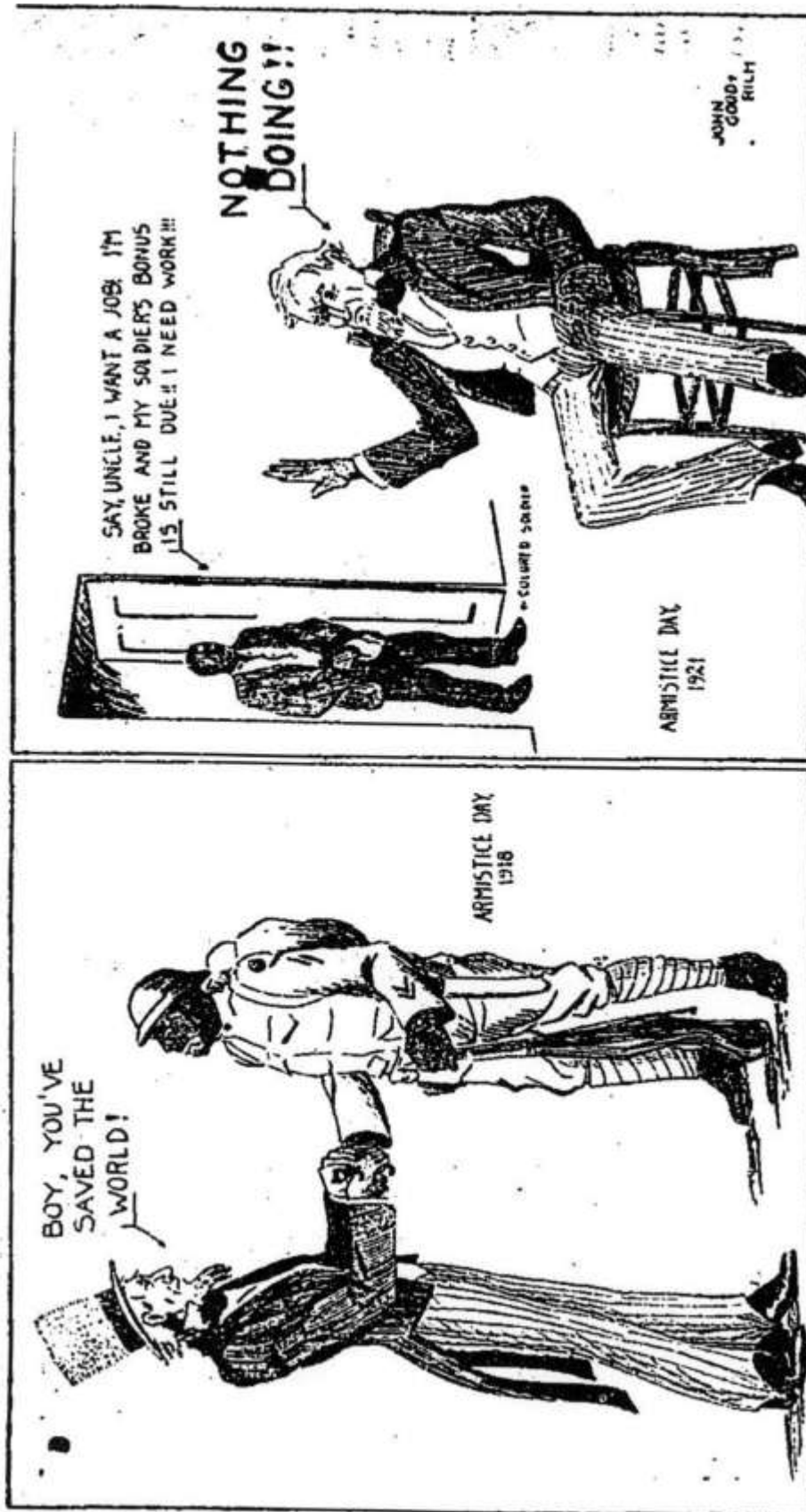
“They Have Ears but They Hear Not”

[Psalm 135:17]

The Crisis, November 1920

African American periodical. Cartoonist: Albert Alex Smith.

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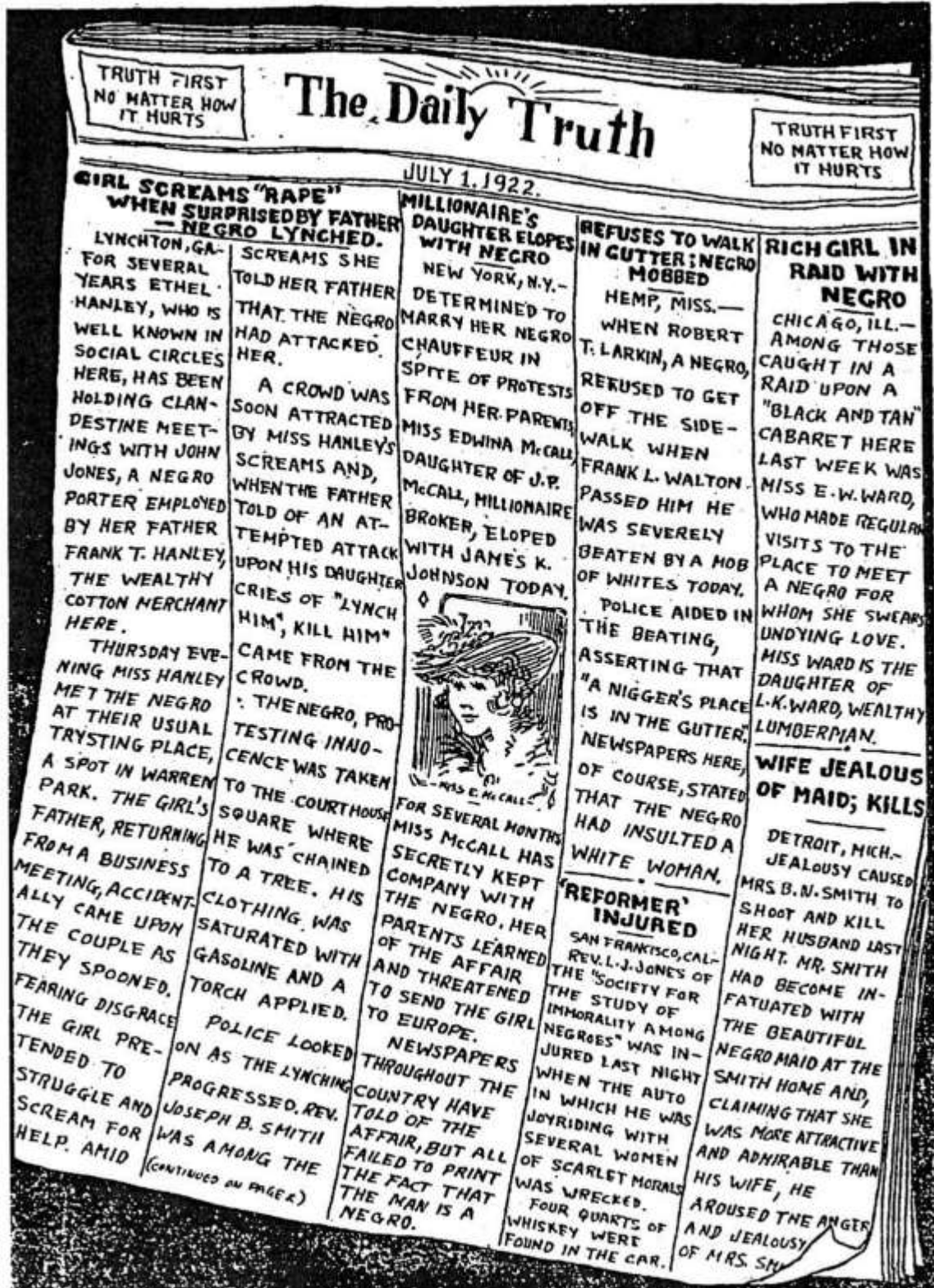
Untitled

The Afro-American, Baltimore, November 11, 1921

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: John Good [—].

Despite widespread support for a "soldier's bonus" for World War I veterans, Congress delayed legislation until 1924.

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"If the Daily Press Dared Tell the Truth"

The Chicago Defender, July 1, 1922

African American newspaper



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“Cast Overboard”

The Afro-American, Baltimore, Dec. 15, 1922

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: John Henry Adams.

G.O.P.: Republican Party (“Grand Old Party”).

Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill: Republican bill introduced in the U.S. Congress in 1918 to make lynching a federal crime; passed in the House in 1922; blocked in the Senate by southern Democrats, after which the Senate Republican caucus vote, on December 2, to abandon the bill in that session of Congress.

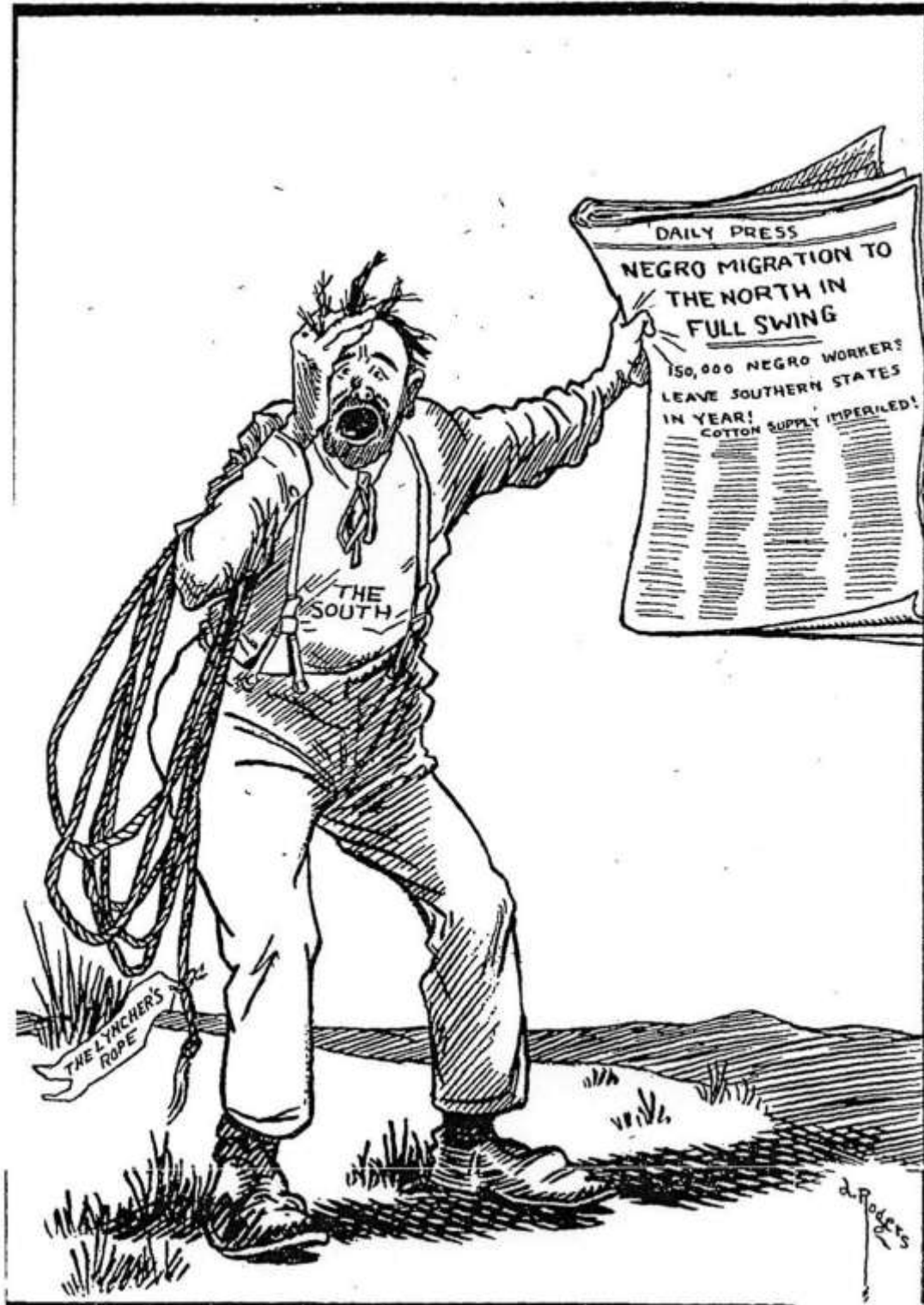


"Their Christmas Tree"

Judge, Dec. 16, 1922

as reprinted in *The Afro-American*, Baltimore, Dec. 29, 1922

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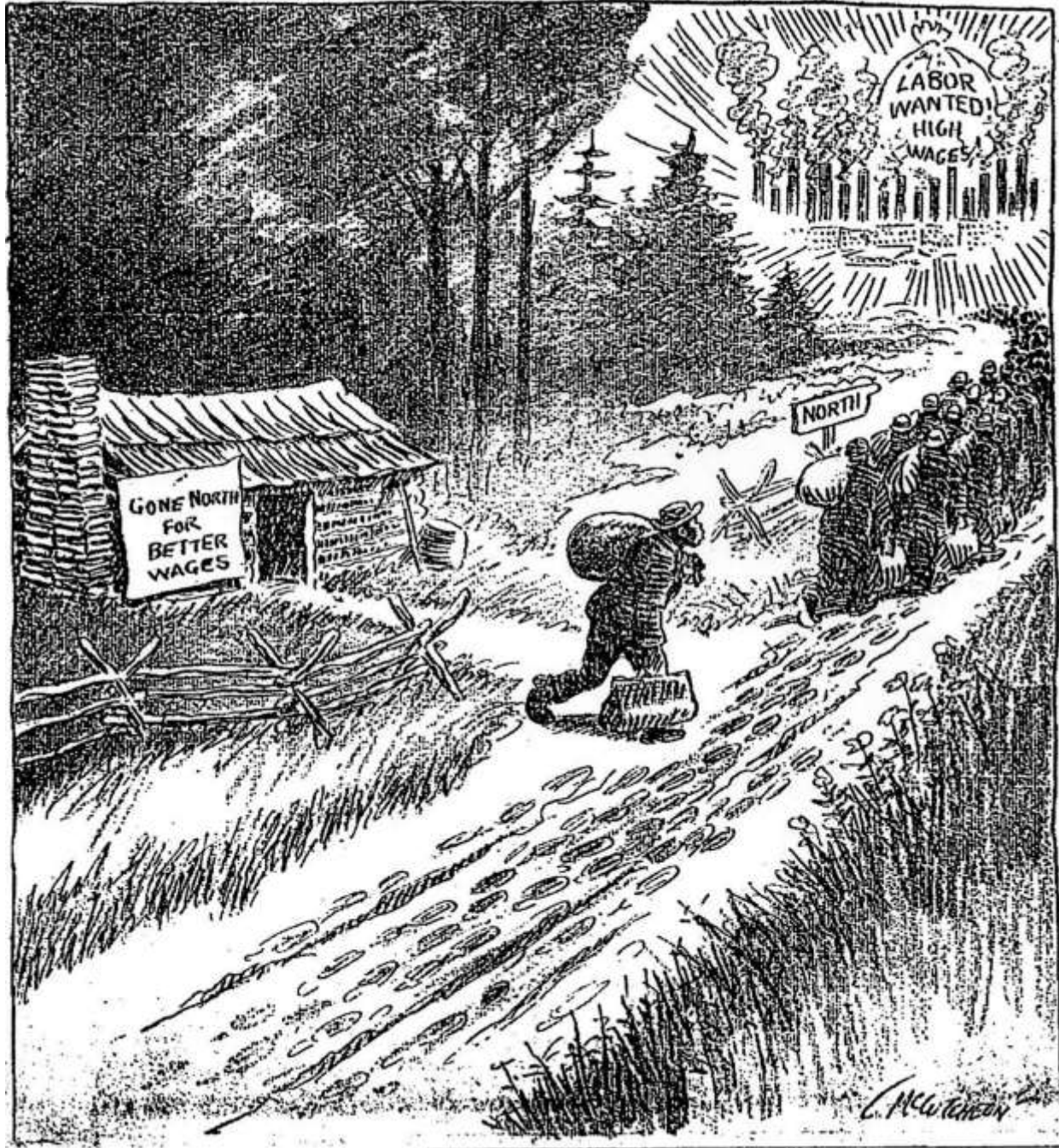


“Great Scot! What Have I Done?”

The Chicago Defender, February 17, 1923

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Leslie Rogers.

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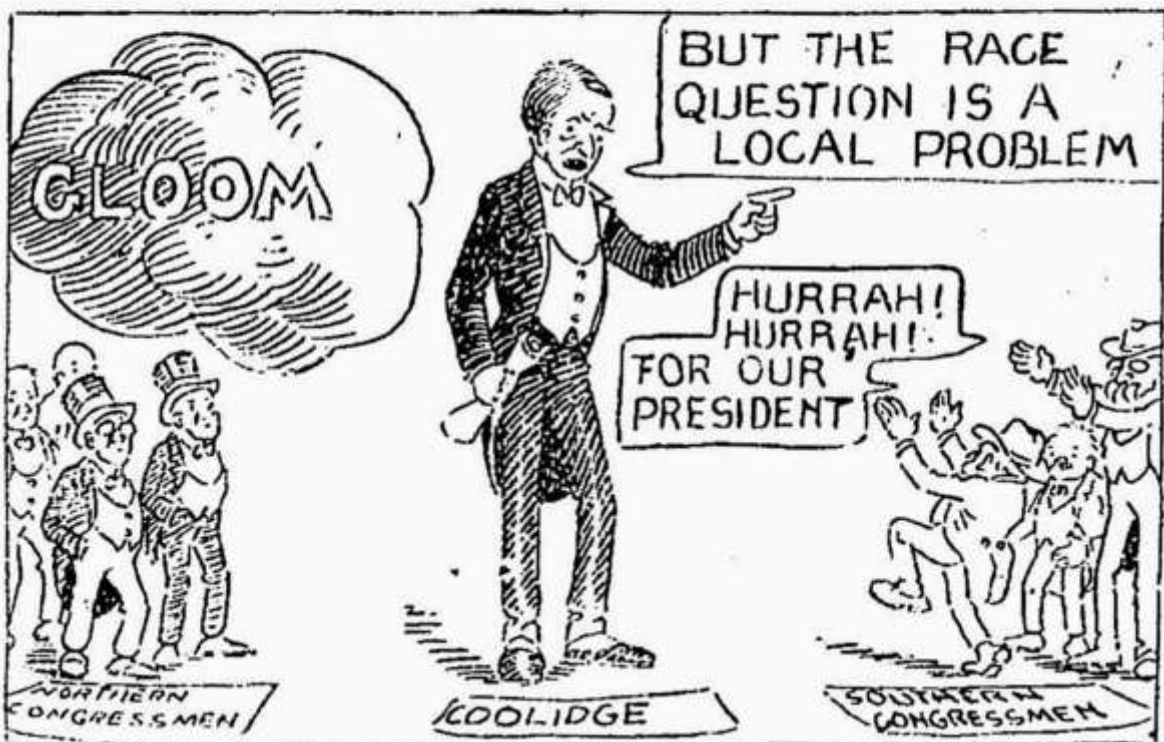


**“The South Will Soon Be Demanding
Restriction of Migration of Its Labor”**

Chicago Daily Tribune, May 10, 1923

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

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“He Tries to Please Everybody”

The Afro-American, Baltimore, Dec. 21, 1923

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Fred B. Watson.

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“The U.S. Constitution Will Soon Be Bobtailed”

The Afro-American, Baltimore, January 18, 1924

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Fred B. Watson.

14th Amendment, ratified 1868: citizenship granted to all persons born or naturalized in the U.S. (thereby granting citizenship to all African Americans); states required to provide due process of law and “equal protection of the laws” for all U.S. citizens.

18th Amendment, ratified 1919: banned the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors in the U.S. (Prohibition); repealed by the 21st Amendment in 1933.



TWENTY YEARS AGO



AND TODAY

“Too Powerful to Keep Out!”

The Chicago Defender, September 13, 1924

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Leslie Rogers.

Gompers: president of the American Federation of Labor from its founding in 1886 to his death in December 1924.



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“Smashing an Old Idol!”

The Chicago Defender, April 25, 1925

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Leslie Rogers.

Antebellum: before the end of the Civil War in 1865 [Latin: “before war”].

“Black mammy”: racial stereotype of the passive, cheerful enslaved woman who cared for the slaveholder’s children.



“State’s Rights or State’s Wrongs?”

The Afro-American, Baltimore, Feb. 20, 1926

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Fred B. Watson.

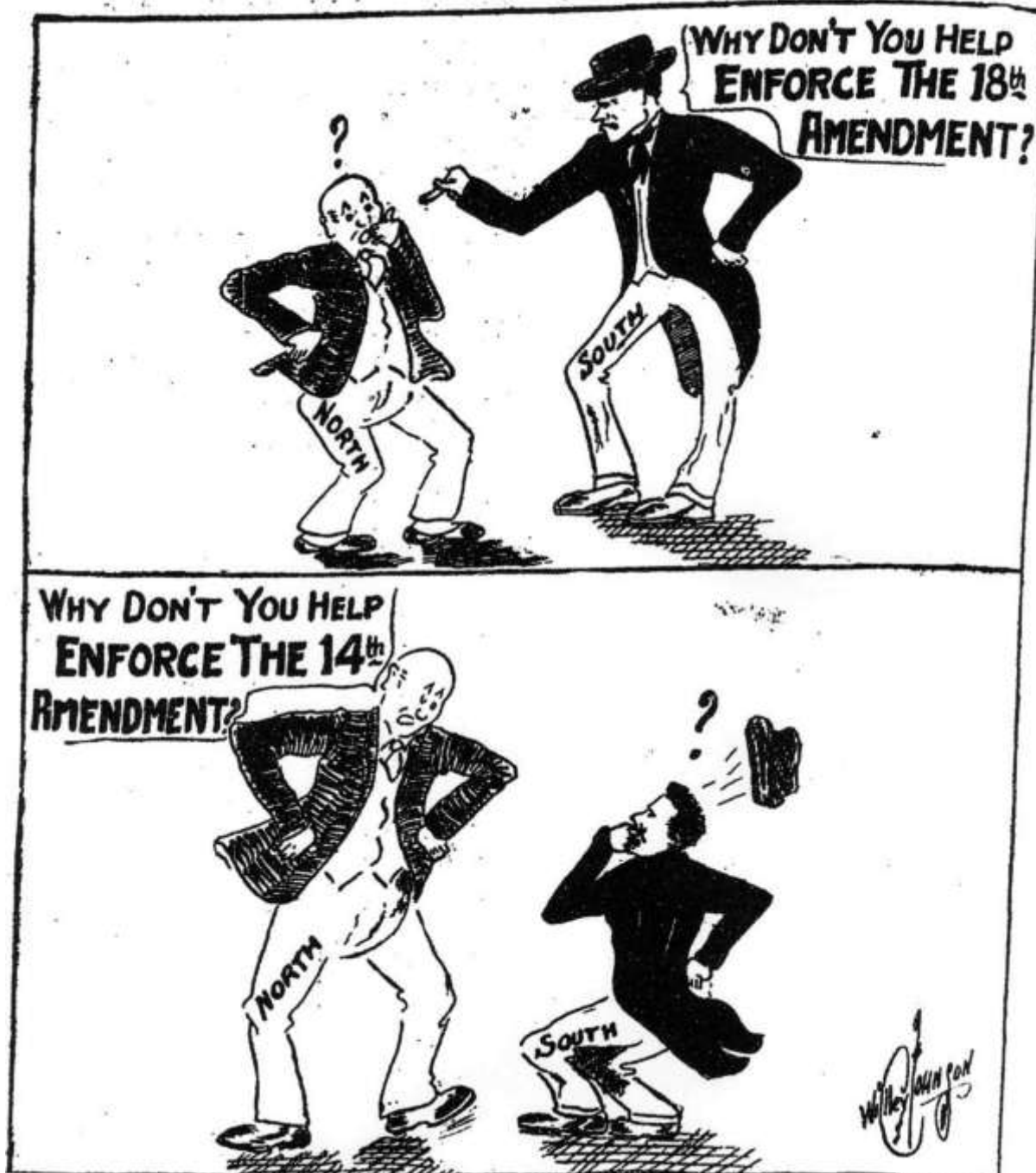
South Carolina: Benjamin Tillman, state governor (1890-1894) and U.S. Senator (1895-1918); known for his virulent support of white supremacy and states’ rights positions.

Maryland: Albert C. Ritchie, state governor (1920-1925): states’ rights advocate and fervent anti-Prohibition spokesman.

California: Friend Richardson, state governor (1923-1927): anti-Progressive governor during enactment of the restrictive 1924 immigration law (National Origins Act, which included the Asian Exclusion Act).

Volsteadism: Support of Prohibition (enforced through the 1920 Volstead Act).

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“The Chain Is No Stronger than Its Weakest Link”

The New Journal and Guide, Norfolk, Virginia, July 24, 1926

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Willey Johnson.

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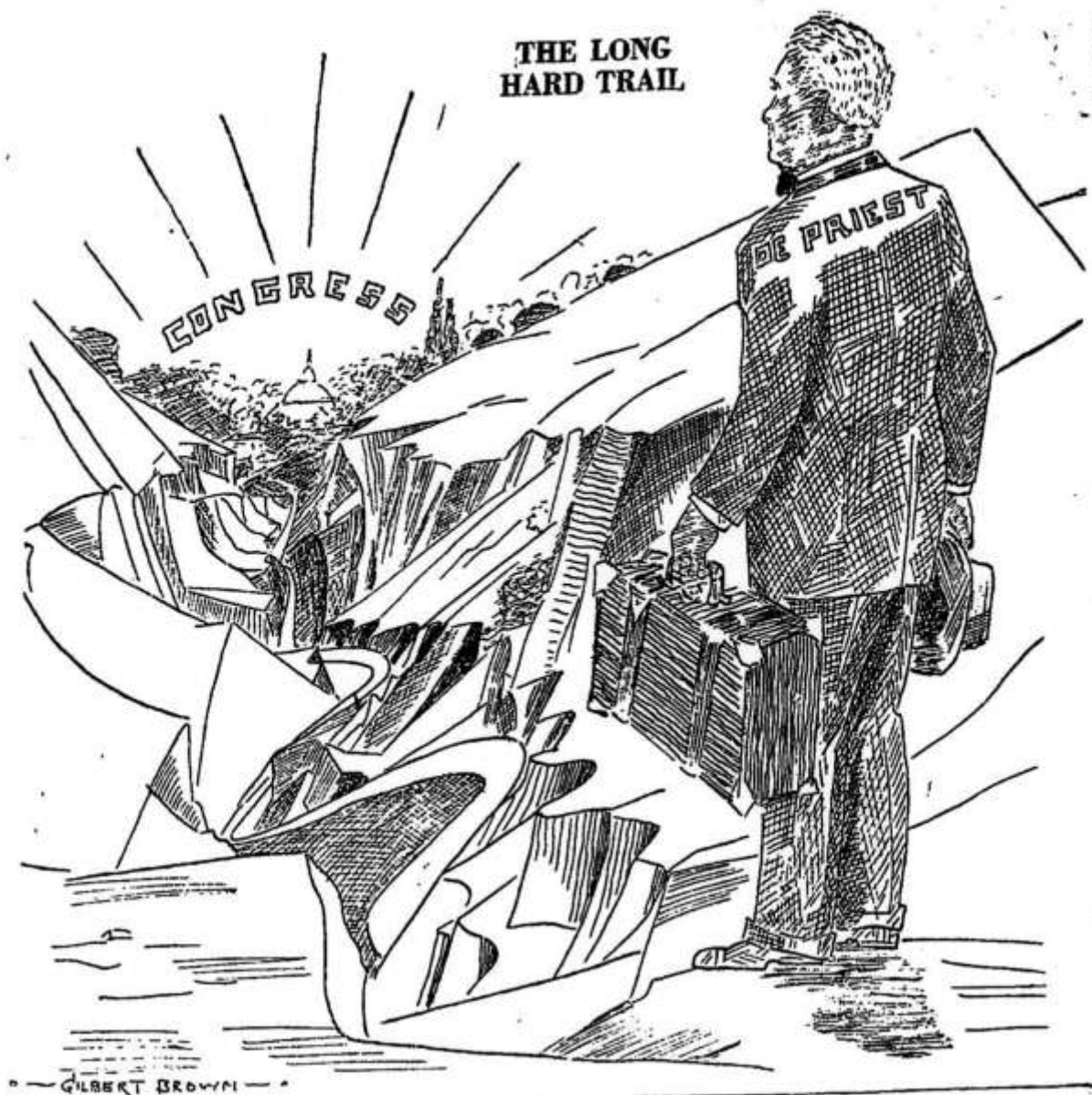
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“Seeing Yourself as Others See You”

The Pittsburgh Courier, March 26, 1927

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Wilbert Holloway.



“The Long Hard Trail”

The Afro-American, Baltimore, August 25, 1928

African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Gilbert Brown.

Oscar Stanton De Priest was the first African American elected to Congress in the twentieth century, serving as the representative of a Chicago district for three terms, from 1929 to 1935.

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