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The New Jim Crow

By TOM WICKER

President Nixon's facile declaration in his television address that "a large and increasing number of blacks" agreed with his antibusing position was no doubt true, but it was nevertheless misleading. Three times, for instance, Mr. Nixon used phrases such as "most Americans" or "the great majority of Americans" and followed with the quick interjection "white and black."

Whatever he intended, there is little evidence to show that blacks generally are against busing, although many unquestionably are—particularly where one-way busing affects only their children, not white children. But even Roy Innis of C.O.R.E., a strong spokesman for black community control of its own schools, criticized Mr. Nixon's proposals. He pointed out that there was nothing in the Nixon program that would give blacks control of their own schools, even though those schools would remain largely all-black.

Roy Wilkins of the N.A.A.C.P. immediately said the President's proposal would lead to a constitutional crisis, and Clarence Mitchell, the N.A.A.C.P. representative in Washington, called it an "unmitigated lie" that the black community was opposed to busing. Representative Shirley Chisholm, the Presidential candidate, said Mr. Nixon was trying to close the door on racial equality.

In the South, Mayor Howard Lee of Chapel Hill, N. C., who is running for Congress in that state's Second District, denied that the choice was "between blind acceptance of 'massive busing for racial balance' or 'a moratorium on all future busing.'" In the North, the Black Law Students Union at Yale (commenting on the busing controversy before the Nixon speech), pointed out that housing patterns assured school segregation, if busing were to be prohibited, and added:

"History has taught us that the communities which now oppose busing pursued policies, in the past, of neglect

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toward all black schools, thereby creating the very conditions which they do not want for their children. No reason exists to believe these same policies will not be pursued again if busing is prohibited or curbed."

The most powerful black attack on the Nixon antibusing program was made by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the Chicago black leader, in a Saturday afternoon speech that received little national attention. Among other things, Mr. Jackson said of Hubert Humphrey's claim that Mr. Nixon had only adopted the Humphrey position on busing, "as far as I'm concerned that puts [Humphrey] out of the race. . . . We can't deal with Humphrey's yesterday because if he's that sick, he just ain't able to deal." No doubt that had something to do with Mr. Humphrey's fast attempt to abandon his original stand with Mr. Nixon.

The Reverend Jackson called the President's antibusing address "the most dangerous speech that I have heard in this century, or that I have read." He warned his listeners to "beware of any issue that George Wallace and Richard Nixon agree on," since if a combination of Wallace and Nixon votes re-elected Mr. Nixon, "it will give Wallace authority in the White House."

The President's intention, he said, was to make the judiciary subject to the executive and to "withdraw the courts" from protection of the black man's rights, just as President Rutherford B. Hayes, after the election of 1876, had "withdrawn the troops" that had protected blacks during Reconstruction. And he warned black separatists not to confuse "antibusing" with "black control." The President, he pointed out, "has not said a word about us controlling the community."

Mr. Nixon really wanted to substitute money for desegregation, the Reverend Jackson said, and thus to erect "a re-enforced race wall that costs \$2.5 billion." But desegregation had meant increased educational opportunity for blacks, he insisted, and busing had accomplished much desegregation; therefore, "busing may not be the solution but it must remain an option."

The Chicago leader closed his speech with a ringing appeal for a kind of nonracial class politics "to save the Union":

"When I look around and see the 50 million hungry . . . 34 million of them white—they ain't got nobody feeding them a meal, just feeding them Jim Crow . . . whether it is Hanrahan, Wallace or Nixon, they're just feeding them Jim Crow. . . ."

"This country today needs jobs or income. That's what it needs. It needs health care. It needs medicine. It needs peace and nonracism. Jim Crow is not a substitute. . . . The issue ain't no more to save the Democrats, the issue is not to save the Republicans, but the democracy and the republic are at stake and unless someone rises with the power to reconcile black and white, young and old, he is not qualified to save a nation. The issue in 1972 is not to save your party, not even your pride, but to save the Union."