

# SCIENCE

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## Diagnosis of AMA: Bad Case of Jim Crow

The powerful doctors' lobby—the far-reaching American Medical Association—is like Hercules with athlete's foot. The disease is local, uncomfortable, not fatal, and, as long as patent remedies are used to treat it, incurable.

Like a recalcitrant patient, the AMA, refuses to take the strong medicine that might cure its constituent medical societies in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and North Carolina of their segregation policies.

And so, for the third straight year, the annual AMA meeting that opens here today will be faced with strong protests from its more liberal state delegations. There will be a picket line of doctors Monday noon at the Coliseum protesting segregation as they did on the boardwalk in Atlantic City two years ago.

The annual demand for stronger desegregation medicine has become a ritual dance engaged in by the Medical Committee for Human Rights, with headquarters in New York and the month this year in late May the committee asks the AMA for action to end the discrimination against Negro physicians practiced by county medical societies in the South. And every year the AMA takes the patent medicine right off the drug store shelf. It either reaffirms its conviction that segregated medical societies are undesirable or it passes a new and slightly stronger resolution to the same effect.

### The Figures

But the committee points to the following 1965 facts in asserting that pronouncements do no good:

☐ Georgia: 68 of 76 local medical societies deny membership to qualified Negro doctors.

☐ Alabama: 66 of 70 the same.

☐ Mississippi: Only two county medical societies admit Negro doctors.

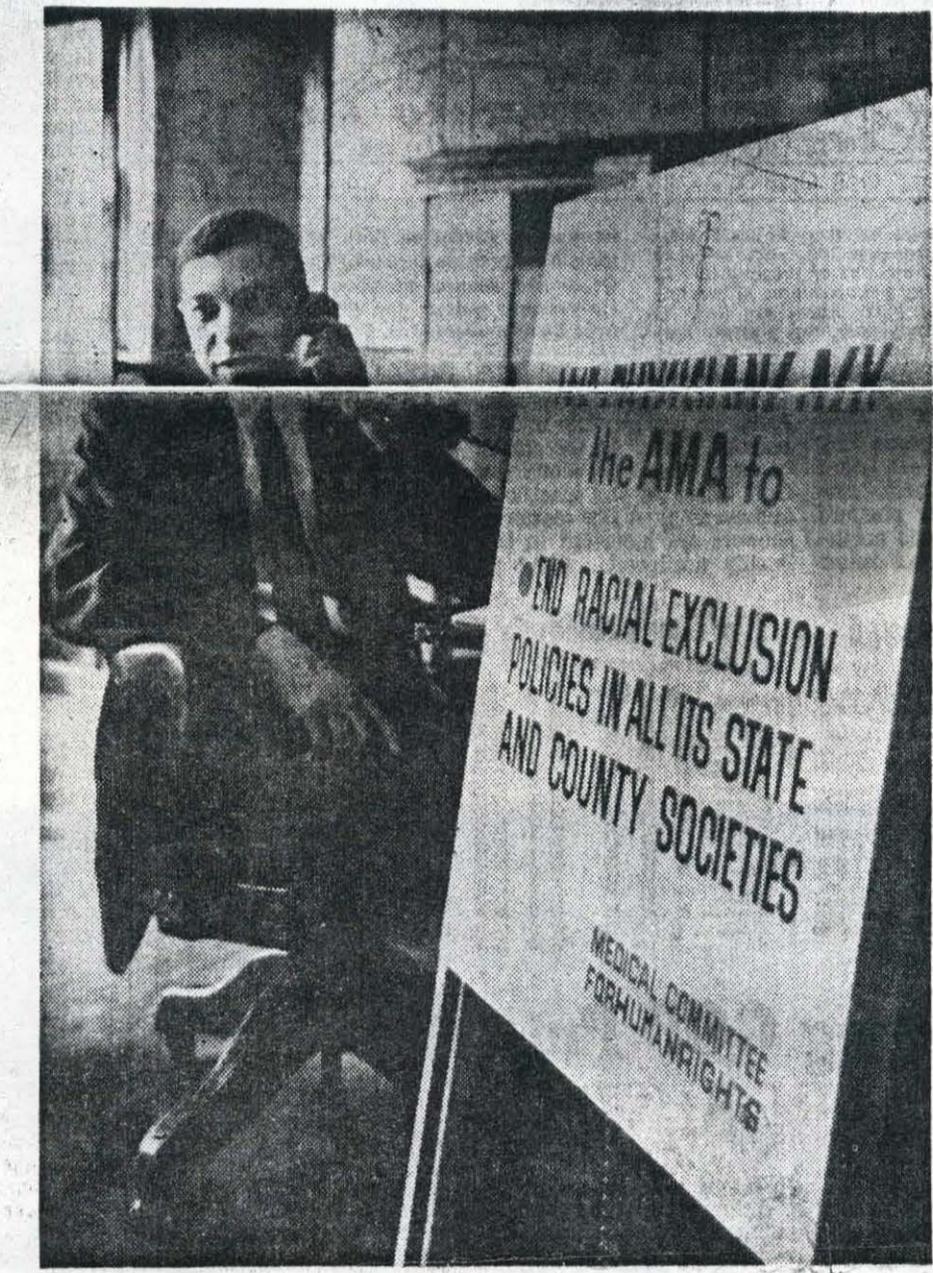
☐ Louisiana: No Negro doctors in local medical groups.

☐ North Carolina: Three Negro physicians are members of local medical societies in the entire state.

The all-Negro National Medical Association claims 435 members in those five states—68 in Georgia, 88 in Alabama, 46 in Mississippi, 58 in Louisiana, and 155 in North Carolina.

There were only nine lonely pickets on the boardwalk in 1963. There were no pickets at all last year in San Francisco, but there were strongly worded anti-segregation resolutions from the California, New York and New Jersey delegations. This year, there will again be picketing. Estimates of their numbers range from 50 to 200.

And the New York State Medical Society is bringing before the 228-man AMA house of delegates a strong-medicine resolution demanding that the AMA change its constitution and kick out any county societies that discriminate. Such strongly worded resolutions have a way of shrinking under



Herald Tribune photo by JOE NOBLE

Johnny Parham reads placard for A. M. A. meeting.

the strong sun of AMA committee persuasion during the semi-annual sessions of the delegates. They go into the closed (to the press) committee hearings like lions and emerge shorn like lambs.

For the record, the New York resolution, unanimously adopted on May 24 of this year, would put a paragraph in the AMA constitution that would read:

"Membership in the American Medical

Association or any constituent association shall be revoked if such constituent association shall allow any component society to deny membership to any individual on the basis of race, creed or color."

That resolution strikes at the heart of AMA chiefs' contention that the organization is just an amalgam of grass roots, that its 200,000 doctors really run the organization through their 1,900 local societies and the 50 state societies into which those county groups are lumped.

In his most recent liturgical reply to the Human Rights committee's most recent letter protesting continued discrimination in Southern states, AMA General Counsel Robert B. Throckmorton first prints the anti-discrimination resolutions of June, 1964, then appends the explanation: "... this would be a fundamental change in the operation of the American Medical Association as a federation of state medical associations." Of course, the state associations, when queried, claim that they are simply federations of the county societies.

But Dr. John Holloman, of Harlem, one of the founders of the Human Rights group and now a member of its board, believes the leadership of AMA in its about policy than that.

### New Management

Dr. Holloman says that Dr. Norman Welch was going to do something about segregation in AMA. Dr. Welch, a Boston internist, was president of AMA until his death last September.

Dr. Welch was succeeded by Dr. Donovan Ward, an Iowa general surgeon whose major goal for AMA is to refurbish the image of the general practitioner. Dr. Holloman has no high hopes of Dr. Ward on integration. In fact, Dr. Ward did not reply to the Human Rights Committee's letter signed by Dr. Holloman, by Dr. Aaron Wells of Cornell Medical School and by Dr. Richard U. Hausknecht of Mt. Sinai Hospital. The AMA president had his lawyer handle the protest.

Dr. Holloman says, "Dr. Welch's death was untimely. He agreed to do what he could to help." Now the Medical Committee for Human Rights accepts shelter from the Broadway Congregational Church at 211 W. 56th St., Manhattan. It looks like any other headquarters in the integration struggle.

The executive director of MCHR is a graduate of the Urban League, Johnny Parham. His committee sent 107 doctors to Mississippi last summer and had 37 in Selma during the unpleasantness there. Now MCHR is aiming to keep doctors in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana and South Carolina on a regular basis. There has already been trouble about unlicensed, out-of-state doctors treating civil rights workers down South, but the MCHR doctors plead the emergency provisions of state medical regulations, which allow any doctor to treat anyone in an emergency.

Meanwhile, the AMA leaders appear to feel that pronouncement poultices will cure the burning foot-itch of their organization. "It feels a little better, today." That is a fair summary of their position.

Note Bottom of Placard; Medical Committee for Human Rights. Integrated I was an Active Member, esp while pres. Nat. Med Assoc 1965. Participated Selma to Montgomery march. <sup>lost</sup> 5 miles out all day in Plaza Health mobile