

## **AIRLINE SEATING: A NOVEL IDEA**

*By Karl Milde*

The last time I flew in an airplane I noticed something wrong. It was wrong to me, anyway. The passenger cabin was divided into two sections called “first class” and “coach.” The people in first class were allowed to enter the coach section, but the people in coach were prevented from entering the first-class section during the flight. Why should this be?

To make sure that coach passengers remain in their section, a curtain is drawn between the two classes to block the aisle. The flight crew bars coach passengers from entering the first-class section. They allow first-class passengers to enter the coach section, but they almost never do.

That’s the whole point, of course. The airlines know that first class passengers don’t want to mingle with, or even think about, those less fortunate than themselves. To do so would bring to mind the less-than-satisfactory conditions in the coach section: the narrow seats with cramped legroom, the limited overhead storage space, the inadequate food, the narrow aisle, and the overworked stewards and stewardesses. In contrast, the amenities in first class are much better than they need to be. Why can’t the airline mix first class and coach travel so that the flight is comfortable and enjoyable for everyone?

The airlines take advantage of the flying public by making the class distinction. They charge the well-to-do unreasonably high prices for a seat and make money on the rest by squeezing them into the airplane cabin.

We have the British to thank for the idea of class distinctions among the traveling public. The railroads were first developed in England in the nineteenth

century after George Stephenson created the first practical steam engine called the “Rocket” and laid track between the cities of Stockton and Darlington in 1825, Liverpool and Manchester (1830), and Birmingham and London (1836). Because the Brits were extremely class conscious at the time, passenger railroad cars were designed to maintain a separation between the classes. The seats were divided into first class (royalty and financiers), second class (middle class tradesmen) and third class (the working majority). Over time though, these class distinctions faded away and railroads throughout the UK and Europe now have only one type of seating.

Airlines should adopt the same egalitarian concept. They should eliminate the class distinction and make all the seats on a plane comfortable enough for everyone.

Here in America, our founders declared we’re all equal. Let’s keep it that way.