

Edited by PHILIP S. FONER  
and RONALD L. LEWIS

THE BLACK WORKER, VOLUME VI

# The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1920 to 1936

*With a  
Foreword by*

**Keona K.  
Ervin**





THE BLACK WORKER

VOL. 6

THE BLACK WORKER DURING THE POST-WAR PROSPERITY  
AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION, 1920-1936

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# **The Black Worker**

A Documentary History from Colonial  
Times to the Present

## **Volume VI**

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# **The Era of Post-War Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1920–1936**

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Edited by  
Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis



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## FOREWORD

KEONA K. ERVIN

Philip S. Foner, Ronald L. Lewis, and Robert Cvornyek birthed a new generation of Black labor history scholarship with the publication of *The Black Worker: From Colonial Times to the Present*, eight substantial volumes of documentary history. Published over the course of six years, from the late seventies to the mid-eighties, the voluminous compilation of archival materials both anticipated and reflected its moment. Writing at a time of renewed interest in labor history, Black history, and social history, and no doubt deeply influenced by the upsurge of peace, Black freedom, women's, anti-imperialist, and workers' rights movements during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Foner, Lewis, and Cvornyek helped to ensure that the emergent "history from below" included Black workers. This multi-volume documentary history is as wide as it is deep. It is the product of a massive, Herculean effort that involved compiling and organizing thousands of pages of primary source documents and making sense of the complicated and contradictory stories they tell. In the acknowledgements that open the first volume, Foner and Lewis thank no less than 23 libraries and historical societies across the United States. They, along with Cvornyek, would go on to thank many, many more in each successive book. Theirs was big, synthesis-style, social, political, intellectual, and institutional history that tried to capture as broadly as possible the patterns, trends, and themes that made race and class, and the Black labor experience, in particular, significant, shaping forces in United States history. With its compelling perspective on the salience of Black labor history along with its sheer breadth and depth, *The Black Worker* was and is required reading for students of labor and working-class history and African American history.

During the eras that preceded the publication of *The Black Worker*, a racially exclusive academic enterprise largely ignored the scholarship produced by Black labor scholars, preventing it from reaching a wider public audience. Mainstream (white) labor history's "Black problem" may best be defied as, simply put, erasure. Black workers were largely absent from or mere footnotes in established histories; dominant narratives presented a "house of labor" occupied primarily if not exclusively by white, male, industrial workers. What's more, these histories tended to frame the story of the making of the American working-class as one of American trade unionism, failing to provide a full examination of most unions' widespread practice of racial exclusion and discrimination, much less attempts by Black workers to organize their own labor. Of course, the absence of Black scholarship in mainstream accounts did not mean that Black labor scholars did not exist or were not producing works about Black labor history. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Black social scientists such as Gertrude McDougald, Elizabeth Haynes, W.E.B. Du Bois, Abram L. Harris, Carter G. Woodson, Robert C. Weaver, and Charles H. Wesley created the field of Black labor studies.<sup>1</sup> But the Black scholars who used social science as a weapon against the racist ideologies of their time—ideologies, we should point out, that found their basis in pseudo-scientific arguments about the nature of Black labor—were largely overlooked, though not without significant resistance. Radical scholars like Foner, who were themselves confronting their own particular forms of marginal status within mainstream academic institutions, became key contributors to the opening of fields to marginalized voices. *The Black Worker* should be credited with playing an influential role in shaking up the "house of labor" such that its established residents had to, in some ways, make room for newcomers.

A deep and sustained examination of the history of Black workers was a fitting choice for the editors of *The Black Worker* because personal and professional commitments pushed them to challenge their field of study. Countering economist John R. Commons's and the Wisconsin School's theory of labor history, Foner and his co-editors argued that the history of the American working class was fundamentally one of class struggle: workers were aware of their oppression by capitalism; they should act in their own economic and political interests as a subjugated class; and trade unionism could be, with its potential fully realized, the most powerful engine of social democracy for the working classes.<sup>2</sup> *The Black Worker*'s editors pushed industrial unionism over craft unionism, political unionism over non-partisanship or bipartisanship, and the fundamental antagonism between labor and capital over shared interest between the two. The historical experiences of African American laborers powerfully articulated the legitimacy of such an approach. In this vein, one of the central arguments that emerges in the volumes is Black workers' militancy. From congressional committee hearings of the late nineteenth century in which Black workers discuss their living and working conditions and make a compelling case for national advocacy, to the labor organizing and economic activism of civil rights workers such as Coretta Scott King, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, and Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Black Worker* shows that Black workers' "class consciousness"—to borrow a term in vogue at the time of its publication—was an engine of social transformation. There was a "usable past" of working-class militancy starring American labor's neglected members, they seemed to say.

*The Black Worker* is a documentary history spanning from "colonial times to the present." At the opening of each new volume, the editors rightfully point out labor history's resurgence during the 1970s and count their work as "the first compilation of original materials which encompasses the entire history of Afro-American labor." Foner and Lewis were right to note that, while there had been a renaissance in Black history during the 1960s and 1970s, during which the field moved into the mainstream in unprecedented fashion, studies that explicitly emphasized the history of Black labor and reached similar magnitude as *The Black Worker* had yet to be published. In the introduction that opens the volumes, they state the clearly important and arguably undertheorized fact that "the vast majority of Afro-Americans are, and always have been 'workers'," and as such, were fundamentally central to the shaping of American labor history. An obvious point under even the most hasty of reviews of African American history, yes, but the statement was, in fact, hardly inconsequential. With this observation, Foner and Lewis, and others, issued a challenge to the field of American labor history, noting its glaring oversight of Black workers. One might also say that by pointing out the irony of the preponderance of Black laborers in American history, on the one hand, and the dearth of Black labor history in mainstream accounts, on the other, Foner, Lewis, and Cvorneyek were making larger observations about and issuing challenges to the basic assumptions of their field. In other words, the presence of Black laboring bodies into the precious canon of (white) labor history would yield powerful new insights about the history of class in America in the broadest and most illuminating of ways.

Divided in two major parts, with the first four volumes dedicated to antebellum history through the end of the nineteenth century and the second four to the twentieth, *The Black Worker*'s central themes include, most principally, Black workers in industrial slavery and the skilled trades under slavery and following emancipation; free Black workers' experiences in the labor marketplace; Black unionism and Black

workers' role in strikes; race relations in labor unions, particularly white workers' racial hostility and intransigence and white labor leaders' acquiescence to such reactionary behavior; and debates over the at times fractious civil rights–labor coalition following the mid-1950s when the AFL and CIO merged and as the struggle for Black citizenship took a decidedly influential turn. The volumes also include the writings of prominent Black male political and social leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Kelly Miller, Ira De A. Reid, A. Philip Randolph, and Paul Robeson, for example, as well as proceedings from Black gatherings such as the influential Black Convention Movement and the Colored National Labor Union of the nineteenth century along with sizeable compilations of important twentieth-century Black labor organizations. Documents on AFL proceedings, the organization of the CIO, and Communist trade unions, especially during the 1930s, provide a window into the ways that race and trade unionism were inextricably connected throughout the history of American unionism.

Among its greatest strengths, *The Black Worker's* rich collection of primary source materials makes possible the writing of many books on various topics within Black labor history. The history of Black labor during the antebellum period comes alive through articles pulled from local newspapers in, for example, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Louisiana, and South Carolina, and data pulled from field-defining scholars of slavery such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Edmund S. Morgan, and Ulrich B. Phillips. One learns, for instance, about the costs of maintaining industrial enslaved populations from a 1970 article published in *Business History Review* and about the occupations of free people of color in Georgia in 1819 from data pulled from Phillips' *A Documentary History of the American Industrial Society* (1910). Passages from famed abolitionists William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass recount the experiences of the hiring out system and other firsthand accounts document the processes of escape and the means by which enslaved persons purchased their own freedom.

Records central to grasping collective understandings of work, uplift, and racial progress as defined by Black leaders and ordinary Black workers during the late nineteenth century, when debates about racial politics were especially rich, fill the collection's second volume. Proceedings of the Colored National Labor Union's inaugural national conference, its second and third conventions, and meetings from local and state chapters come from records such as *The Christian Recorder*, *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and *The New Era*, while papers from Duke University's Freedmen's Bureau Project, and statistics from the National Bureau of Labor suggest the critical importance of labor to Black organizational and political life. State Black labor conventions in the late nineteenth century tell the story of what occurred in places such as Richmond, New York, Saratoga, and Alabama. Documenting the rise of local Black militancy immediately following the Civil War, the sources depict striking Black workers across the South, including, for instance, the Galveston Strike of 1877 and a strike led by Black washerwomen. Testimony from Black workers about racial terrorism in South Carolina show the centrality of Black labor to the activities of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, while Black labor radicalism, perhaps defined narrowly as Black socialism or Black Marxism, finds articulation in a section that includes an 1877 speech by abolitionist and socialist Peter H. Clark.

The documents that make up volumes three and four show the centrality of Black unionism to the debates about labor and capital that profoundly shaped national politics in the late nineteenth and turn of the twentieth centuries. They include, for example, the testimony of Black workers to the 1883 Senate Committee on Relations

between Labor and Capital and debates within the Knights of Labor about whether Black workers were influential political participants. The formation of the Knights and Black workers' organizing in the South is told through New Orleans local papers such as the *Picayune* and *Weekly Louisianian*. Also noteworthy are Frederick Douglass' address to the National Convention of Colored Men in Louisville, Kentucky and the work of writers who crafted editorials for the *New York Freeman*, *New York Age*, and *AME Church Review*. The proceedings of Knights of Labor conventions are found in local and national papers, the papers of Knights leader Terrence V. Powderly, and excerpts from his account, *Thirty Years of Labor* (1889). The Colored Farmers' National Alliance, a crucial organization that inserted Black farmers into the white-dominated and racially exclusive or discriminatory "southern alliances" such as the Farmers' alliance and the Populist or People's Party, holds a prominent place.

The fourth volume concerns itself primarily with the robust debate within the AFL over race and the inclusion of Black workers. The documents show just how racially exclusionary were the practices of AFL-affiliated unions. If Gomerism is proven limited in such accounts, then Black worker organizing and militancy, by contrast, is shown to play a decisive role. Key turn-of-the-century strikes, for example, the New Orleans General Strike of 1892 and the Galveston Longshoreman Strike of 1898, are depicted through local and national newspaper coverage. Documents about the United Mine Workers and their unique practice of including Black workers, Black coal miners and the debate around Black strikebreaking, as well as writings by labor leaders Albion W. Tourgee, Ignatius Donnelly, and Du Bois (in this case an excerpt from his important study *The Philadelphia Negro*), round out the list.

The collection aptly documents Black migration, including the Exodusters movement of the late nineteenth century and the better-known Great Migration of the early twentieth century. In this case, the editors draw upon records from the United States Department of Labor and studies included in the *Journal of Negro History*. Congressional committee reports on the East St. Louis Race Riot of 1917, records on the Chicago Race Riot of 1919 taken from the Chicago Commission on Race Relations study, and writings in the NAACP organ *The Crisis* and A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen's *The Messenger* tell the story of the precarity of Black workers' lives during the early twentieth century, but also the ways in which they organized to navigate and oppose it. The work of notable Black labor scholars in addition to Du Bois, finds a home in the middle volumes. For example, George E. Haynes, the first African American man to earn a Ph.D. from Columbia University and Director of Negro Economics for the United States Department of Labor, and Helen B. Irvin, an expert on Black women's labor, have writings that yield social-scientific insight. On the subject of Black women's labor history, volume six includes a rich collection, with studies on Black women industrial workers in Philadelphia from the U.S. Department of Labor and articles written by labor intellectuals including Helen Sayre, Mary Louise Williams, Nora Newsome, and Jean Collier Brown for publications such as the National Urban League's *Opportunity* and *The Messenger*, as well as for the Women's Bureau. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has voluminous records dedicated to it. Numerous articles from *The Messenger*, *The New Leader*, *The Chicago Defender*, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, and records from the Chicago Historical Society capture the work of the historic Black-led labor union of Pullman Porters.

Volume seven is among the richest of the collection because of the high rates of labor union mobilization and worker self-organization that went on during the 1930s



and 1940s. The Congress of Industrial Organizations and its mass organizing efforts that included Black workers receives considerable attention. The organizing efforts of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, which we learn supported federal anti-lynching legislation, the National Negro Congress, and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union are documented through sources drawn from Black newspapers, Communist publications such as *The Daily Worker*, library archives, the records of civil rights organizations, and the papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt. A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement of the 1940s and the fight over the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the series of AFL conventions in which Randolph introduced multiple anti-discrimination resolutions, reveal organizing efforts in the watershed years of wartime mobilization and the influence of industrial democracy as a widespread political aspiration. The postwar period concerns the organization of the National Negro Labor Council, which played an important role in infusing an emphasis on jobs and economic justice into a national civil rights platform, and the work of the activist Paul Robeson and the illuminating publication *Freedom*, his radical newspaper. The final volume delves deeply into the relation between civil rights and labor during the 1950s and 1960s. A notable collection of speeches by civil rights leaders Vernon E. Jordan, Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, and Benjamin Hooks at AFL-CIO conventions is also included. It concludes with documentation of the organizing efforts of Black and Brown hospital workers, an effort widely supported by the civil rights movement and the Black Power movement.

We should measure the significance of *The Black Worker*, in part, as a function of the life and times of its principal editor. The author of over 100 published works, Philip Sheldon Foner was an avowed and unapologetic Marxist labor historian.<sup>3</sup> The son of Russian immigrants, Foner earned a bachelor's and master's degree in History at City College and a Ph.D. in History at Columbia University under the direction of Allan Nevins, the famed two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and historian. Foner landed his first professorship at his alma mater. In 1941, City College officials fired Foner, who was one of 50 faculty members to lose their positions, and his brothers, Jack, who also taught in the history department at City College, and Moe, who worked in City College's registrar office. His brother, Henry, a teacher in the city's public schools, was also blacklisted. This was a prelude to a time, during the Cold War, when leftist scholars were routinely charged with Communist conspiracy and subjected to investigations, committee hearings, and expulsions from their places of employment. Although he was banned from mainstream academic institutions for more than 25 years, Foner continued to research, write, and publish during this time. Forty years after the dismissal, City College leaders issued him a formal apology.<sup>4</sup>

Following his stint at City College, Foner became co-owner of Citadel Press, weathering the turbulent McCarthy period as a self-employed writer and editor. After 26 years of being banned from employment in the academic profession, Foner became a professor at Lincoln University in Lincoln, Pennsylvania, a Historically Black College and University, where he worked during the 1960s and 1970s until his retirement. Lincoln's graduates included Black luminaries such as Horace Man Bond, Kwame Nkrumah, Melvin B. Tolson, Langston Hughes, Thurgood Marshall, Gil Scott-Heron, and Black Arts Movement architect Lawrence (Larry) Neal. For a historian of U.S. labor and working-class history and an exile of one the country's most important public higher education institutions, Lincoln University was a welcome home. One notes in Foner's body of work the influence of the Black educational institution, whose students

were undeniably influenced by and participants in the civil rights and Black Power revolution. A 1994 recipient of the New York Labor History Association's lifetime achievement award, Foner was also the author of the ten-volume *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*, *Women and the American Labor Movement* and *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*. He is widely recognized by historians of American labor as a key thinker in the field.<sup>5</sup>

Although his co-editors' public roles did not match that of their colleague, Lewis's and Cvornyek's contributions and professional accomplishments were no less important. After earning a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Economics at Ohio University and a master's and doctorate in History at the University of Akron, Lewis joined the faculty at the University of Delaware, holding a joint appointment in African American Studies and History. He taught courses in African American history and produced scholarship that became an influential part of an emerging canon on race and labor. Lewis worked at the University of Delaware for the duration of the publication of *The Black Worker*. His 1978 co-edited volume with James E. Newton, *The Other Slaves: Mechanics, Artisans and Craftsmen*, obviously influenced the structure and content of *The Black Worker*'s volume one, which succeeded in complicating the history of Black labor under slavery by focusing on workers laboring outside the plantation regime. Following the publication of *The Black Worker*, Lewis published books on the history of Black coal miners and Appalachian studies and history. Earning his bachelor's in Political Science and History a year after Lewis's arrival to the University of Delaware, Cvornyek received a master's degree in History at Lewis's alma mater, the University of Akron, and later earned a master's of philosophy in History and a doctorate in History at Columbia University. After the publication of *The Black Worker*, Cvornyek published books and articles on African American sports history.

The desire of the editors of *The Black Worker* to promote research in Black labor history was realized. The volumes became a core contribution to the growth and development of the field of Black labor studies. *The Black Worker*, like other publications of its time, was an act of historical recovery that helped usher in and make possible the emergence of new, influential scholarship. It is commonplace for historians of marginalized persons to assert that telling the history of their subjects isn't simply an act of incorporation but is rather one of revision in that conceptual frameworks are rethought. Reflection on the significance of *The Black Worker* shows this incorporation to be no small or insignificant task. Inserting the voices and actions of the marginal into the canon of history was of monumental importance, and was a defining task of the volume editors' generation of envelope-pushing historians and progressive and radical intellectuals. By incorporating new voices into the standard chronology of American labor history, *The Black Worker* helped to push the field to revise its core keywords and conceptual underpinnings.

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## Notes

1. Francille Rusan Wilson, *The Segregated Scholars: Black Social Scientists and the Creation of Black Labor Studies, 1890-1950* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).
2. Melvyn Dubofsky, "Give Us That Old Time Labor History: Philip S. Foner and the American Worker," *Labor History* 26 (1985): 119-120.

## FOREWORD

3. Lawrence Van Gelder, "Philip S. Foner, Labor Historian and Professor, 84," *New York Times*, December 15, 1994.
4. Van Gelder, "Philip S. Foner, Labor Historian and Professor, 84," December 15, 1994; Robin D.G. Kelley, foreword to Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619–1981* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2017), xiv.
5. Kelley, xiv.





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## PREFACE

This is the sixth volume of THE BLACK WORKER: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT. Recently there has been a surge of interest in working-class history, but this series represents the first compilation of original materials to encompass the entire history of Afro-American labor. As with the preceding volumes, the documents presented are placed into historical context by introductions and notes, and original spellings have been retained except where they obscure the intended meaning.

THE BLACK WORKER DURING THE POST-WAR PROSPERITY AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION, 1920-1936, begins with an assessment of the economic condition of black workers by such astute observers as W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles S. Johnson, Robert C. Weaver, and Ira De A Reid. The considerable space given to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters suggests the importance black workers attached to that union's success, a significance far beyond what was warranted by size alone. Volume VI also gives special consideration to relations between the American Federation of Labor and the black worker, and the struggle to eliminate the color bar in the labor movement. The frustration generated by the recalcitrance of organized labor to changing its policy regarding black members led some Afro-Americans to seek support from the political left. But it was not until the founding of the Congress of Industrial Organizations that blacks had an opportunity to make real strides toward equality in the labor market.

The editors wish to express their appreciation to those who have been generous in their assistance toward the completion of this book, especially the staffs at the following institutions: American Federation of Labor Archives, Birmingham Public Library Archives, Chicago Historical Society, Library of Congress, University of Delaware Library, United States Department of Labor Library, International Fur Workers' Union Archives, National Archives, State of Alabama Department of Archives, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and the Shomberg Collection of the New York Public Library.

We owe a special note of thanks to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for permission to reprint articles from THE CRISIS. A number of articles from OPPORTUNITY also are reproduced in this volume, and they are reprinted with permission of the National Urban League. For decades both organizations have been in the forefront of the struggle for economic equality, and without their cooperation this book would not contain a representative gathering of documents.

After six volumes it is difficult to turn a new phrase which conveys our gratitude to Lila Prieb for another virtuoso performance at the typewriter, to Susan Lewis for reading the manuscript, and to Gail Brittingham for assisting at critical moments. We can only reiterate our sincere thanks.

Philip S. Foner  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Ronald L. Lewis  
University of Delaware

PART I

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE BLACK WORKER

## ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE BLACK WORKER

The "roaring twenties" are often depicted as an era of general prosperity; yet for blacks, and the majority of whites for that matter, this was not the "golden age." Actually, the already deplorable economic condition of Afro-America began to deteriorate even before the Great Depression of the thirties. Although consistently underpaid in relation to white workers and forced to accept the least desirable jobs, blacks were charged exorbitant rents to live in crowded black ghettos from which they could not escape. Black wage-earners usually found themselves excluded from skilled and semi-skilled, white collar, and, without exception, from managerial positions. E. Franklin Frazier, the noted black sociologist, summed up the situation in 1927: "There are two types of business in New York in terms of Negro hiring policy: those that employ Negroes in menial positions and those that employ no Negroes."

The Great Depression of the 1930s began for black workers by the end of 1926. "The last to be hired, the first to be fired," Negroes experienced widespread unemployment as early as 1927, and, by 1929, about one-fifth of all blacks employed in industry had already been thrown out of work. The areas of employment open to blacks, such as the coal, iron, steel, and lumber industries were suffering from declining production and could not absorb those who were squeezed out of cotton production where black workers historically were concentrated, further aggravating unemployment for Negroes. Documents 1-23 demonstrate the difficulties encountered by black workers in the post-war era.

Thus, blacks already suffered from serious economic deprivation when the depression which followed the 1929 stock market crash enveloped the nation and pushed the number of unemployed Americans from 3 million to 15 million by 1932. However much whites suffered, for blacks it was much worse, as can be seen in the unemployment differentials. A National Urban League report for 1931, based on 106 cities, demonstrated that the proportion of Negroes unemployed was from 30 to 60 per cent greater than for whites, and that the percentage of Afro-Americans among the unemployed ran sometimes four to six times as high as their population percentage. As the depression deepened, the differentials between white and black unemployed increased. In Cincinnati 28 per cent of the white and 54.3 per cent of the Negro workers went without work in 1933. Southern cities showed the same pattern, with black unemployment about twice that of white. Relief statistics showed an equally grim picture. Even though blacks constituted only 9 per cent of the population of St. Louis in 1933, for example, they comprised 60 per cent of the relief cases.

The economic difficulties aggravated the usual prejudices encountered by black workers in the labor market. Many employers immediately fired their Negro workers or forced them to undercut white wage-earners in order to keep their jobs. It became a general practice to replace blacks with whites who were in need of employment. As the caste system in the labor force descended the economic ladder, jobs which had previously been classified as "Negro work" became better than no work at all for whites, and blacks were brusquely shoved off the last rung. Documents 24-26 reveal the desperation of black workers during the 1930s.

## THE TWENTIES

## 1. HOWARD

By Helene Margaret

A BLACK man works uptown for a big corporation,  
 wrapping packages all day,  
 sending off mail bags,  
 and washing the limousine of the big boss.

"Howard's a good nigger," they say,  
 because he smiles at their bad humor,  
 because he bows when they blame him,  
 and is polite even to their profanity.

His face is a brown mask . . .  
 a mechanical smile and a row of white teeth,  
 His face is a lie . . . a treason to his people,  
 and a curse upon his country.  
 An old clerk, forty years at a bookkeeper's desk,  
 kicked him, and he smiled back  
 a mechanical, white-toothed smile.  
 "Howard's a good nigger," they say.

If the dark blood frozen in his veins were to melt,  
 if the pent-up sorrow of his people were to cry out  
 in one burst of righteous wrath,  
 how they would laugh at him,  
 with the sneering superiority of white men!  
 "Damned nigger! Dog!" they would shout.  
 He would go home at dusk  
 with a crumpled check in his pocket,  
 a piece of blue paper singing to him,  
 "You cannot come back tomorrow.  
 You cannot come back tomorrow."  
 His blood would be burned to ashes,  
 his anger broken with despair,  
 and his body would even shrink from the half-white blood  
 of his mulatto woman.

He might haul coal for a while, or dig ditches . . .  
 But, "Howard's a good nigger," they say,  
 and as long as his face is a frozen mask,  
 a mechanical smile . . .  
 he may wrap packages all day,  
 send off mail bags  
 and wash the limousine of the big boss.

*Opportunity*, 7 (May, 1929): 156.

## 2. THE HOSTS OF BLACK LABOR

By W. E. Burghardt Du Bois<sup>1</sup>

American industry is slowly beginning to awake to the fact that there is  
 in this country a great reservoir of labor which has been only partially tapped.  
 The South has nine million black folk of whom five million are productive



workers. As a mass they are ignorant and unskilled, but they are ambitious, willing to learn, and for the most part at present wretchedly underpaid. Lynching, lawlessness, lack of schools, and disfranchisement have slowly but surely made them ripe for change.

What is America doing with these black laborers? We may envisage four hosts who must deal with them--the planter, the manufacturer, the union laborer, and the Northern Negro. The planter inherits a tradition from which he seldom escapes. This tradition regards the Negro laborer as a serf, without a vote, with little education, low wages, and medieval conditions of work. The manufacturer, North and South, has as his ideal a surplus of common labor, whether black or white, which will keep wages low by severe competition and periodic unemployment. The union laborer proposes so to restrict and monopolize skilled labor as to compel the employer to grant a living wage. These three hosts are pretty well known; but there is a fourth who is not so often thought of. He is the Northern Negro, the representative of the 1,725,141 Negroes established in the North either a generation or more ago or by more recent migration, who have, except in the case of the newest comers, found an industrial place and a racial philosophy and who are the first to be affected by a widespread migration from the South.

These, then are the four hosts waiting to welcome or repel the Southern black laborer. What has been the result of their and his interactions? We can perhaps best trace it by noticing the gyrations of a little black dot on the map of the United States. This little black dot represents the center of gravity of the Negro population in the United States. This little dot was near Petersburg, Virginia, in 1790. It moved south and then west until 1910, when suddenly and for the first time in American history it struck eastward, and in 1920 was nine and one half miles farther east and nineteen and one half miles farther north than ten years before.

What does this mean? It means that between 1870 and 1910 the Negroes sought economic salvation in the free land of the West and Southwest and that the migration in this direction offset the considerable migration north and east; but that with the beginning of the World War there occurred the greatest revolution in migration which the Negro has known for a century; and that by actual census figures, the net gain of the North and West and loss of the South between 1910 and 1920 was 334,526 black folk.

This northward movement of the Negro population was renewed in the fall of 1922. The great Northern industrial plants sent out a call for semi-skilled and unskilled labor. Just as the cutting down of immigration during the war made a scarcity of common labor, so the new immigration laws together with expanding business are having the same effect at present. The result can be felt all through the South; not as a sudden movement, but as a gradual and expanding tremor.

It is emphasized by the attitude of the white South. There is still the slave-holding psychology. The Commissioner of Labor in Georgia openly declares that his department is going to stop the "enticing" of Negroes away by arresting "labor agent parasites" and "heavily fining" them; and by other methods of law and force. Can he keep Negroes in the South by these methods? A colored spokesman for five families talked last December to a reporter of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*: "They claimed to have been kept in debt year in and out by landowners. One man, who refused to give his name, said he had worked ten years on one plantation, and this year in settling up he had only \$50 coming to him. He claimed this would not pay for clothing for his family, let alone buying provisions. What live stock they had in the year 1921 was sold to help them through the crisis when cotton was at its lowest price." To this debt-peonage have been added in recent years the ravages of the boll-weevil. The secretary of the American Cotton Association notes the depopulation of cotton plantations by both white and black farmers on this account and notes that no young mules have been shipped to the cotton belt since the spring of 1920.

The result of all this may be easily conjectured. A colored minister of the Methodist Episcopal church writes: "As district superintendent for seven years, touching twenty-five counties in Mississippi, the State which had, according to the census of 1910, almost one-tenth of the Negro population of the United States of America, my observation and experience lead me to state that the exodus is still on and will no doubt continue gradually toward the North and West for some years. In many places hundreds have gone within the last few months. Many churches have depleted memberships because of the exodus.

Seventy-five were counted that left one community within twenty-four hours." The *Memphis Commercial Appeal* of December 24 declared that within ninety days more than 12,000 Negroes had left the cotton fields of Mississippi and Arkansas for the industrial plants of Chicago, St. Louis, and Detroit. It stated that on an average 200 Negroes leave every night from Memphis northward on the Illinois Central, taking with them not only their household goods, but often several months' provisions.

The Columbia, S.C., *State* notes the departure of Negroes from South Carolina, and W. P. Conyers, a white citizen of South Carolina and former member of the State Board of Pardons, said in a recent speech: "We have educated many Negroes, and it is from this class of educated, intelligent, industrious, thinking Negroes that the emigrants are coming. It is from the very class of Negro that the South can least afford to lose. But the thinking Negro, the Negro with some education, some ambition, a desire to better care for his family and educate his children, is going North in large numbers. And he doesn't come back."

From Georgia we learn that some "13 per cent or 32,000 of the total number of Negro farmhands in Georgia is estimated to have moved North during the last twelve months." South Carolina and Florida offer figures almost as startling, while the migration during one recent week of more than 5,000 unskilled Negro laborers from North Carolina has resulted in the shutting down of some fifty highway construction projects. From Arkansas, one gentleman writes us, "there is a certain alarm in all circles over the large outflow exodus and there seems to be no means of stopping this migration."

This is the crux of the matter. To be sure it is reported that thousands of the newcomers are finding employment at relatively high wages, but this does not settle the matter. First of all there is no sign that even this continued migration of its labor force is really impressing the South. There is no real diminution of Southern lynchings; there is some improvement in schools, but this is usually in cities and seldom in the country districts; and above all there is the sinister growth of the Ku Klux Klan. Despite this, little Southern papers continue to declare fatuously--we take the words from the Gaffney, South Carolina *Ledger*: "The South is the home of the Negro and nowhere on earth can he receive the consideration he does at the hands of Southern white men!"<sup>2</sup>

These statements are not true and Negroes know they are not true. They know too that in the long run the South cannot keep them from migrating in spite of offensive measures of various sorts. And the Negro is increasingly determined not to submit to Southern caste rule.

This does not minimize his difficulties in the North. First he must find a job, and between him and the better jobs stand the labor unions. Undoubtedly in the North the attitude of the labor union has reflected the attitude of the white public. There has been a determined effort to keep the black laborers out of the skilled unions, and while the unions have had to give in here and there, there has been little real change in this policy of exclusion. No Negro today can belong to any of the railroad unions and the various "full crew" laws were simply methods of driving out Negro competition. Whenever there is an attempt to unionize labor beyond the highly skilled field immediately the race problem comes to the fore as in East St. Louis and in the late steel strike. In the South in the same way the unionized white laborer is willing to furnish mobs to keep the black field hand "in his place."<sup>3</sup>

But with common labor scarce and semi-skilled labor unorganized the Negro can gain a foothold, although often this involves "scabbing" and increased hatred and prejudice. He accepts low wages and long hours because even these are better than Southern peonage. And with this situation the Northern industrial barons are perfectly content and congratulate themselves.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to this the new Negro laborer is immediately forced upon the established Northern Negro group. Now the position of this group is not strong economically nor socially. Its security depends largely upon the non-agitation of the race problem. If racial differences are not emphasized by newspapers or by new facts the Northern Negro becomes gradually a citizen judged by his individual deserts and abilities. If, however, there comes a sudden new migration, the level of intelligence and efficiency in these newcomers is almost inevitably below that of the Negro already established in the North. Public opinion lumps the new with the old without discrimination. New racial irritation, hatreds, and segregations arise. The problem of new dwelling-

places becomes severe and it is a double problem, for not only must the new black men have homes to shelter them, but the white home owners must, as far as possible, protect the beauty, moral level, and value of their homes.

The Northern Negro, therefore, faces a peculiar dilemma. He knows that his Southern brother will and must migrate just as he himself migrated either in this generation or the last. He feels more or less acutely his own duty to help the newcomer, and the Negro churches and charities of great cities like Chicago and New York have done a marvelous work in this direction even though it has fallen far below the need. But on the other hand the black Northerner knows what this migration costs. In the years from 1900 to 1922 there has been an average of a race riot in the United States every year, half of them in the South and half in the North. Serious encounters have been threatened in a half dozen other Northern and several Southern centers. In these same years, 1,563 Negroes have been lynched; since the war thirty-four Negroes have been burned alive at the stake. In other words the race war is not simply a future possibility--it is here.

From this turmoil and interaction of interests and human passions has come one very great result and that is the pushing of the American Negro by sheer necessity to a higher point of courage, intelligence, and determination, of economic stability and clear thinking than ever before in his history or in the modern history of any Negro group. He easily leads the black folk of the world. And if there has lingered any conviction that the Negro is going to be satisfied with a permanent position of caste inferiority it is high time that that thought was dispelled from the minds of thinking Americans.

Here then is the critical time. What shall the public say? It is tempted to say: Bring the South north. Discourage Negro migration by reproducing "Jim Crow" conditions of Alabama and Texas in Ohio and New York. Such a policy is suicidal. The Northern Negro has a vote and is learning how to use it. A national caste movement would weld into unity a powerful mass of desperate men, led by intelligence and property, filled with resentment, armed with the ballot, and determined to fight to the bitter end in alliance with any group or element that promised success. Such a mass might be clubbed to death by mobs, but remember that it cost Chicago thirty-eight deaths, 537 injured, and millions of dollars in money to make an unsuccessful and bitterly regretted attempt at this method of race adjustment.

The public, therefore, in the end must say: There is but one way out. The South must reform its attitude toward the Negro. The North must reform its attitude toward common labor. The unions must give up monopoly and aristocracy as methods of social uplift. The Negro must develop democracy within as well as without the race.

*The Nation*, 116 (May 9, 1923): 539-41.

### 3. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND LABOR CONDITIONS

#### Negro Migration

The migration of colored workers, to which the Secretary of Labor called attention toward the end of January, has continued in increasing volume. The movement began during the fall, largely in sections which had suffered from the boll weevil, and in which, as a consequence of its ravages, the tenant farmers found themselves in actual destitution (MONTHLY LABOR REVIEW, February, 1923, p. 269), but as the spring opened it has spread pretty generally throughout the Southern States.

The Department of Agriculture, under date of April 23, sent out a release stating that a survey of southern farming districts showed a marked movement of negroes from the farms to northern industrial centers. According to this, 32,000 negro farm hands or laborers have left Georgia within the past 12 months, Alabama reports that approximately 3-1/2 per cent of the whole body of negro farm workers have moved North since the last crop season, and Arkansas shows a movement of about 15,000 negro farmers. About 22,750 negro farmers have left South Carolina since September 15, 1922. Referring to this last State, the

New York Journal of Commerce declares that "owing to the migration whites now outnumber negroes in South Carolina, a condition which has not existed before within the memory of the living.

Under date of April 25, an Associated Press dispatch says that the migration of negro laborers from North Carolina has been so heavy since the spring opened that the State highway commission officials have found it necessary to shut down more than 50 highway construction projects. In this case the laborers are supposed to have gone to Richmond and Baltimore, attracted by the offer of better wages.

The iron and steel industries are said to be turning to the South as a recruiting field for their labor. The Iron Age (May 3, 1923, p. 1273) reports that the Youngstown companies are bringing in negro workers.

Employment conditions still continue to attract interest among independents, for the reason that the supply of common labor is dwindling. One of the corporation subsidiaries has recently imported large numbers of negro workmen from Virginia, paying their fare to Youngstown. An independent has likewise secured common labor from the South in large numbers.

The extent of the migration is arousing uneasiness in parts of the South. Some of the States have laws requiring heavy fees from anyone acting as an agent to secure labor for migration, and they are trying to enforce these strictly. Mississippi, according to a dispatch from Jackson, dated May 3, is trying to work out a more constructive plan.

A committee composed of eight white men and five negroes to study the critical labor situation in agricultural and industrial sections of Mississippi brought about by the migration of the negroes from this State to northern manufacturing centers has been appointed by business men and plantation owners here.

The reasons for the negro's response to the demand from the North for his services seem to be somewhat complex. Higher wages than he has any prospect of getting in the South offer an inducement, but the general opinion is to be that these alone would not be sufficient to make him leave his home. The Department of Agriculture gives high wages as the chief cause, but adds others.

Boll weevil conditions last year, which made cotton growing unprofitable for a number of negro farmers; unrest among returning negro troops who experienced more attractive living conditions away from farms during and after the war; and breakdown of the contract labor system are given as contributory causes.

At the first meeting of the Mississippi committee, mentioned above, both white and colored speakers stressed other than economic causes. The negroes had lost confidence in the fairness of the white population, they said, and they objected to the violation of their civic rights. They preferred the South, but were unwilling to put up with their treatment there. "The masses of the Negro race want to stay here, but they are not going to do it under present conditions."

*Monthly Labor Review*, 16 (June, 1923): 34-35.

EDWARD KIEFHABER TO ROBESONIA IRON COMPANY, ROBESONIA, PA., February 7, 1923

INTERSTATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY  
(Licensed and Bonded)  
LABOR ADJUSTERS AND INTERPRETERS  
Pioneer Employment Specialists

M. Preskin, Proprietor  
Formerly Employment Manager  
Rockwood & Company

All kinds of help furnished  
for railroads, mines, stone  
quarries, bridges, water  
works, foundations, brick  
yards, dams, highways,  
plants, etc.  
Over 75,000 applicants are  
interviewed by us yearly.

Gentlemen:

We beg to call your attention to our exceptional facilities for furnishing you with any number of good able-bodied Foreign Laborers or skilled Mechanics (not of the floating type, but good foreign workmen) consisting of such nationalities as Russians, Poles, Slavs, Hungarians, Swedes, Danes, Spaniards, Italians or any other preferred nationality on very short notice.

Our office in this city is the headquarters for this class of help, and inasmuch as we have many years experience recruiting and transporting Foreign Labor, particularly for your line of work, we believe that our service would be well worthy of your investigation.

We are listing below a few of our many clients whom we have served in the past to their entire satisfaction, and to whom we respectfully beg to refer you as to our reliability, etc.

Assuring you of our utmost attention at all times, and hoping this offer will have your early consideration, we beg to remain,

Yours very truly,  
INTERSTATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

Edward Kiefhaber  
Ass't. to Manager

References: United States Steel Corp. New York City.  
Pittsburg Steel Co. Pittsburg, Pa.  
American Smelting & Refining Co. Maurer, N.J.  
Aluminum Co. of America, Massena, N.Y.  
Lehigh & Wilkesbarre Coal Co. Wilkesbarre, Pa.  
Atlantic Utilities Corp. New York City

STRIKE ORDERS ACCEPTED

John Fitzpatrick Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

## 5. JOHN GOCHER TO INTERSTATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY, FEBRUARY 8, 1923

Interstate Employment Agency  
73 West Street  
New York, N.Y.

Gentlemen:

We are in receipt of your favor by your Mr. Kiefhaber, relative to laborers.

This Company is a comparatively small one and we do not employ labor in any quantity.

We do have places at the present time for about six (6) Italian laborers (Northern Italians preferred) for whom we can provide boarding places. We also have a vacant house in which we should like to install a married Slav who would take care of three or four boarders.

We should like to have you advise as to the terms on which you supply labor and any other details which may be of interest to us.

Very truly yours,

John Gocher,  
Supt. Robeson Iron Co.

John Fitzpatrick Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

## 6. JOHN GOCHER TO A. F. WOODWARD, MARCH 24, 1923

Mr. A. F. Woodward  
1407 East Watauga Avenue  
Johnson City, Tenn.

Dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your note saying that you are in position to supply blast furnace help.

We can use eight or ten blast furnace laborers.

I assume that the men you will furnish will all be colored men and would advise that we have a boarding house in which we can place about ten men, provided one of them will undertake to run the boarding house and handle the crew.

We are paying 35¢ an hour for common labor.

Kindly advise what your terms are and whether you can send men under the conditions outlined.

Very truly yours,

John Gocher, Supt.  
Robeson Iron Co.

John Fitzpatrick Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

## 7. THE RECENT NORTHWARD MIGRATION OF THE NEGRO

By Joseph A. Hill

In 1880, a little more than forty years ago, the center of the Negro

population of the United States as determined by the census was located in the northwestern corner of the state of Georgia. It had traveled far since the early days of the Republic, when as shown by the census of 1790, it was near the southern boundary of the state of Virginia. It was now, in 1880, 163.1 miles farther south than it was then and 413.5 miles farther west, and the total distance it had covered in a direct line was 443 miles, representing an average advance of about 50 miles per decade. It was following the general movement of population in the Southern States. Its rate of advance was slowing down towards the close of the century but was still southwestward. In 1890 it had gone 20 miles further in that direction, in 1900 nearly 10 miles, in 1910 another 10 miles. It was then in northeastern Alabama. That proved to be the turning point--the end, at least for the time being, of the movement southwestward, for the next census, that of 1920, revealed a complete reversal of direction. The center of Negro population was found to have moved not westward but eastward, not southward, but northward, being, in fact, 9.4 miles farther east and 19.4 miles farther north than it was in 1910. It had gone back to the northwestern corner of Georgia but was farther north than it had been in 1880, though not quite so far east.

This reversal in the movement of this sensitive index of changes in the distribution of population was by no means unexpected. It was well known before the census was taken that the Negroes had been going north in large numbers, and the movement of the center of Negro population simply registered that fact.

The immediate cause of the northward migration was the labor shortage in northern industries produced by conditions arising out of the World War. There are doubtless other contributory causes, but a discussion of them lies outside the scope of this paper, the purpose of which is simply to present some of the more significant census statistics regarding the volume and characteristics of this movement of the Negro population.

#### Migration After the Civil War

For a time after the Civil War there were two diverging currents of Negro migration. One was northward from the more northern of the southern states--Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The other was a migration southward and westward on the part of the Negroes in the lower Atlantic and Gulf States.

The northward migration from Virginia after the war was notably large, and was a direct reversal of the current of migration that prevailed under the regime of slavery, when Negroes were being taken south in large numbers. Set free, the Virginia Negro turned towards the North and has been facing in that direction ever since. This northward current of migration was mostly to the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. The number of Negro natives of Virginia living in these states when the war closed must have been less than 10,000, for it was only 13,050 in 1870. But after the war it increased rapidly, as shown by each successive census, and in 1920 was 125,104. The southward migration practically ceased, as is shown by the fact that the number of Virginia Negroes living in the states of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas decreased from 107,934 in 1870 to 10,844 in 1920. Thus the Virginia-born Negro in the cotton states of the South has almost disappeared, although no doubt his descendants there are numerous.

From the states far south there was no considerable northward migration in this period. The North seemed too far away, and the Negro showed no disposition to turn his back upon the cotton fields and seek new fortunes in strange lands. He lacked the knowledge, the means, and the initiative for such an unwise venture. Therefore the drift of the Negro population, following the development of cotton cultivation, continued to be towards the southwest as it had been before the war. There was no reversal of migration here such as there had been in the case of the Virginia Negro. The voluntary migration was in the same direction as the earlier compulsory migration had been.

#### Mississippi As An Illustration

The effect of Negro migration upon the population of the southern states may, perhaps, be best indicated by featuring the figures of immigration to and emigration from a single southern state, selecting for this purpose the

state of Mississippi, which apparently has been affected to a greater degree than most other states by the recent northward migration of the colored race.

In 1870 the Negro or colored population of Mississippi included 124,377 Negroes who were born in other states. They were immigrants, and they constituted more than one-fourth of the total Negro population of the state. It is practically certain as regards most of them that their migration had not been of their own free will. Of the total number, 27,713 were natives of Virginia, 13,284 were born in Tennessee, 16,604 in South Carolina, 14,511 in North Carolina, 12,713 in Georgia, and 22,192 in Alabama.

There had been also a certain amount of Negro emigration from Mississippi as evidenced by the fact that 73,802 Negroes born in that state were living in other states, a majority of them in Louisiana (17,831) and Texas (28,639). Thus when the census of 1870 was taken, the number of Negroes who were natives of other states and had come or been brought to Mississippi exceeded the number who had been born in that state and had gone to other states by 66,944. That represented the net gain to the population of the state through the interstate migration of Negroes. In 1880 this excess, surplus, or gain had increased slightly to 68,245. It fell off to 33,764 in 1890, to 7,228 in 1900, became converted into a deficit of 26,439 in 1910, which deficit increased to 139,178 in 1920. Starting with a surplus of 67,000 we end with a deficit of 139,000. Consider what this deficit means. It means that if all the Negroes who were born in Mississippi and have gone to other states were to return and at the same time all Negroes who have come into Mississippi from other states were to leave, the number returning would exceed the number departing by 139,178, and the result would be an increase of 15 per cent in the total Negro population of the state and an increase of nearly 8 per cent in the total population, white and Negro.

There is a similar history for nearly all southern states, in that the recent censuses show either a growing deficit or a diminishing surplus in the interstate exchange of native Negroes. For another illustration take the state of Texas, which for a time seems to have been the goal of Negro migration in the lower South. In 1870 the number of Negroes in Texas who were natives of other states was 118,114, which exceeded the small number of natives of Texas who had emigrated from the state by 112,348. At the last census, 1920, the excess of Negro immigrants to the state over Negro emigrants from the state was only 3,501. In Oklahoma and in Florida the excess in 1920 was less than it was in 1910 although greater than it was at earlier censuses. In Arkansas there has been little change in the situation since 1890, the excess remaining nearly constant at about 100,000. In West Virginia alone of the southern states has the gain through Negro migration steadily increased at each successive census.

#### South Loses Population Through Negro Migration

The total number of southern-born Negroes in the North at the date of the last census was 727,423. There were also 43,371 in the West. Against this total of 770,794 Negroes who, as shown by the census of 1920, had left the South and gone North or West, there was a small number of northern or western born Negroes who had gone South, the number being, in fact, 47,223, so that the net direct loss to the South by Negro migration was 680,200, which is equivalent to 7.6 per cent of the total Negro population of the South, and to a little more than 2 per cent of the total population of the South, white and colored.

The loss to any state, section, or country resulting from emigration is, however, not adequately measured either by the number emigrating within a given period or by the number of living emigrants in other states or countries on a given date. For it includes also the descendants of emigrants living in other states or countries, that is, if we may assume that the emigrants, if they had remained in their native land, would have had as many children and descendants as they have had in the states or countries to which they have gone. In the case of the Negro emigrants who have gone North there is reason to believe that they would have had larger families and more descendants if they had remained in the South than they have had in the North. So probably it is not an exaggeration, but rather the contrary, to say that the entire increase in the Negro population of the North since 1870 represents a loss in population growth to the South. In the 50 years between 1870 and 1920 the



number of Negroes in the North increased by a little more than 1,000,000 i.e., from 452,818 in 1870 to 1,472,309 in 1920. One million is equivalent to about 3 per cent of the total population of the South and to about 11 per cent of the Negro population.

#### Percentage Negro Declining in the South

In 1870, the population of the South was more than one third Negro. Now it is not much more than one fourth Negro, the percentage Negro having declined from 36 in 1870 to 27 in 1920. It is safe to say that this decrease has not been wholly due to the emigration of Negroes. For had there been no emigration the growth of Negro population in the South would apparently not have kept pace with that of the white. But the difference would not have been as great as it is now. If there had been no emigration the Negro population of the South, as I have just pointed out, would probably be at least a million larger than it is at present, and the percentage Negro would in that case be about 30 instead of 27. The difference probably represents approximately the effect which emigration has had in reducing the proportion of Negroes in the population of the southern states.

If, therefore, there had been no northward migration of Negroes in the last 50 years the total population of the South would presumably be at least 3 per cent greater than it now is, the Negro population 11 per cent greater and the percentage Negro in the total would be about 30 instead of 27.

#### Increase in the Northward Migration

While, as already noted, there has been a constant northward migration of Negroes since the close of the Civil War, the recent migration, that of the last census decade (1910 to 1920), differs from the previous migration in several important respects and first of all in volume or amount. Thus in the period of 40 years from 1870 to 1910 the number of southern-born Negroes in the North increased from 146,490 to 415,533, an average decennial increase of 54,000. But in the decade 1910 to 1920 there was an increase of 311,910, which was more than the aggregate increase of the preceding 40 years and six times the previous average decennial increase.

#### Migration From the Far South

The northward migration of Negroes in the last decade has been to a much larger extent than ever before a migration from the far South. The earlier northward migration was, as already noted, mostly from the more northern states of the South. Even as recently as 1910, 56.2 per cent, more than half, of the southern born Negroes living in northern states came from two states--Virginia and Kentucky. The migration between 1910 and 1920 reduced the proportion who were born in these two states to 37 per cent. On the other hand the proportion of northern Negroes coming from the states farther south, or from what we may term the cotton belt states, including in this class, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, increased from 18.2 per cent of the total number of southern-born Negroes living in the North in 1910 to 40.2 per cent of the total in 1920. The absolute number of Negroes in the North who were natives of these states increased from 75,517 in 1910 to 298,739 in 1920, so there were nearly four times as many in 1920 as there were in 1910.

James Bryce, speculating in regard to the future of the American Negro in the revised edition of his "American Commonwealth," published in 1911, considered the possibility that the Negro might "more and more draw southwards into the lower and hotter regions along the coasts of the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico," and might thus become "a relatively smaller and probably much smaller element than at present in the whole population north of latitude 36° and a relatively larger one south of latitude 33° and east of longitude 99° W." (II, p. 536.) Bryce did not consider or suggest the possibility that the Negro might migrate northward in increasing numbers or that there might be a dispersion of the Negro race rather than a concentration of it. Yet this is precisely what has been taking place since his book was published. The region which he defines by geographic degrees as that in which the Negroes might concentrate includes the states of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida,

Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and the proportion which the Negroes living in those states form of the total Negro population of the United States is at present decreasing, being 50.2 per cent in 1910 and 47.2 per cent in 1920. Within these states the percentage Negro decreased from 47.3 in 1910 to 43.0 in 1920. It decreased also in the other southern states, or the rest of the South, but the decrease was not so marked, being a decrease from 20.1 per cent Negro in 1910 to 18.4 in 1920. The North is the only section in which the percentage Negro has increased in recent years.<sup>5</sup>

#### Negroes in the North

In 1870 the total number of Negroes living in the North was 452,818, but of these 118,071 were in the state of Missouri, which had been a slave state. The northern state with the next largest number of Negroes was Pennsylvania with 65,294; next Ohio with 63,213; then New York with 52,081; New Jersey, 30,658; Illinois, 28,762; and Indiana, 24,560. No other northern state had as many as 15,000.

In 1920 there were 1,472,309 Negroes in the North as compared with 452,818 in 1870; and the northern state having the largest number of Negroes was Pennsylvania with 284,568. New York came next with 198,483, Ohio had 186,187, and Illinois 182,274. Then came Missouri with 178,241. Indiana had 80,810, Michigan 60,082, and Kansas 57,925. No other northern state had as many as 50,000. These 8 states account for four-fifths of the total Negro population in the North. They contain only about two-fifths of the total population of the North. With the exception of Michigan and New York they are states bordering the South.

#### Migration to Northern Cities

In the North outside the large cities there is only a small though a rather widely distributed Negro population. Out of a total of 1,272 northern counties there are, in fact, only 83 in which there are no Negroes. But there are 671 other northern counties in which the number of Negroes is less than 100, making 754 counties--about 60 per cent of the total number--in which there are either no Negroes or less than 100 Negroes; and there are only 183 counties in which there are more than 1,000 Negroes. If for purposes of comparison we make a similar classification of counties for the preceding census, we obtain no indication that any dispersion of the Negroes in the North is in progress. They go to the large cities mostly and remain there.

Of the 182,274 Negroes in the state of Illinois 60 per cent are in the city of Chicago, which city includes only 42 per cent of the total population of the state.

Detroit, in which there are 40,858 Negroes, accounts for 66 per cent or two-thirds of the total Negro population of Michigan.

Of the 198,483 Negroes in New York state 152,467 or 75 per cent are in New York City.

Three cities in Ohio, Cleveland (34,451), Cincinnati (30,079), and Columbus (22,181) account for 46 per cent of the Negro population of that state although these cities comprise only about 22 per cent of the total population of the state.

Philadelphia contains 47 per cent of the total number of Negroes in Pennsylvania as compared with 21 of the total population of the state. Add Pittsburgh and we have accounted for 60 per cent of the Negro population of that state and 28 per cent of the total population.

The above 10 cities contain 45.8 per cent of the total Negro population of the North. The same cities contain 22.5 per cent of the total population of the North. Three of these cities--New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia--contain 26.9 per cent of the total Negro population, as compared with 15.9 per cent of the total population.

#### Percentage Negro in the Population of the North

The total population of the North is now a little more than 2 per cent Negro, or to be more exact it was 2.3 per cent Negro in 1920. From 1870 to 1910 the percentage had been nearly constant, being either 1.8 or 1.9; but the last census, 1920, showed a slight but significant increase. The percentage,

is still small, equivalent to about one-fiftieth of the total population. So only one person in fifty in the northern states is a Negro. If, therefore, the Negroes were evenly distributed over the northern states, to correspond with the distribution of the white population, their numbers would not be large enough to constitute a disturbing factor in the social organism or arouse racial antagonism or introduce a race problem. But as already pointed out they are concentrated largely in certain cities, where they form a considerable and an increasing proportion of the total population. Over 4 per cent of the population of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New Bedford, and Newark is Negro; about 5 per cent of the population of Youngstown and of Cambridge, Mass.; over 6 per cent of the population of Pittsburgh; over 7 per cent of the population of Cincinnati and Philadelphia; not less than 9 per cent of the population of Columbus, St. Louis, and Kansas City, Mo.; 11 per cent of the population of Indianapolis; and 14.2 per cent of the population of Kansas City, Kans. These are all cities of over 100,000 population. Some of the smaller northern cities have still larger percentages of Negroes. Atlantic City is 21.6 per cent Negro.

Within each city there is usually a local segregation, or concentration of Negroes in certain sections or localities--a Negro quarter. In New York City 42.3 per cent of the total Negro population are located in two assembly districts and within these districts Negroes form, respectively, 35 per cent and 49 per cent of the total population. In Chicago there is one ward which contains 44 per cent of the total Negro population of the city and within which Negroes form 69 per cent of the total population. In Detroit the concentration is not so marked, although there is one ward in which Negroes constitute about 25 per cent of the total population, and another in which the percentage is nearly 20.

#### Per Cent Negro Decreasing in Southern Cities, Increasing in Northern

In almost every southern city the percentage Negro, as indicated by the last census, is decreasing. Thus in Atlanta it decreased from 33.5 in 1910 to 31.3 in 1920; in Savannah from 51.1 to 47.1; in Charleston from 52.8 to 47.6; in Columbia from 43.9 to 38.5; in Memphis from 40.0 to 37.7; in Nashville from 33.1 to 30.1; in Dallas from 19.6 to 15.1; in Fort Worth from 18.1 to 14.1; in Houston from 30.4 to 24.6; in San Antonio from 11.1 to 8.9; in Richmond from 36.6 to 31.5; in Washington from 28.5 to 25.1. There are, however, three important cities of the South in which the decrease is hardly appreciable, namely Birmingham (39.4-39.3), Baltimore (15.2 to 14.8), and New Orleans (26.3 to 26.1).

In northern cities, on the other hand, the percentage Negro is increasing. In Chicago it increased from 2.0 to 4.1; in Philadelphia from 5.5 to 7.4; in Pittsburgh from 4.8 to 6.4; in New York City from 1.9 to 2.7; in Cincinnati from 5.4 to 7.5; in Cleveland from 1.5 to 4.3; in Detroit from 1.2 to 4.1; in St. Louis from 6.4 to 9.0; and so in many other northern cities.

#### Occupations of Negroes in the North

What are the Negroes doing in the North? In the South a majority of them --57.7 per cent of the total number of Negro male workers--are employed in growing cotton or other farm crops either as laborers or tenants or owners. In 1920 there were 628,029 Negro farm laborers in the southern states and 834,686 Negro farmers of whom probably about 200,000 were farm owners, the others being tenants or croppers. Leaving out West Virginia, in which only 5.1 per cent of the male Negro workers are engaged in agriculture, the percentage in the other southern states ranges from 29.9 in Maryland to 78.2 in Mississippi.

The fact that most of the Negroes in the North have gone to the cities indicates at once that not many of them are on farms. As a matter of fact less than 6 per cent (5.7) of Negro male workers in the North were reported in the census of 1920 as engaged in agricultural pursuits.

In Chicago Negroes are represented by larger or smaller numbers in nearly all the principal occupations or occupational groups. There is one notable exception. No Negroes are employed as motormen or as street car conductors. But these appear to be the only numerically important occupations from which they are entirely excluded.

In the professions they are represented by 215 clergymen, 95 lawyers, 254 musicians or music teachers, 195 physicians and there are at least a few Negroes in most of the other professions.

They are represented also in the skilled trades. There were in 1920, 126 brick and stone masons who were Negroes; 275 carpenters; 113 compositors and typesetters; 148 coopers; 431 machinists; 286 house painters; 105 plumbers; and 371 tailors.

But the great majority of Negro workers in the cities of the North are employed in domestic or personal service or as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers. In the stockyards of Chicago, there were 5,300 Negro laborers in 1920 and in the iron and steel industries, 3,201. In the slaughter and packing houses 1,242 Negroes were returned as laborers and 1,490 as semi-skilled operatives. There were 1,835 Negroes returned as building or general laborers, 1,210 as laborers, porters, and helpers in stores, 2,139 as porters in domestic or personal service, besides 2,540 railway porters, which means doubtless Pullman porters. There were 1,822 Negro janitors, 2,315 Negro waiters and 1,942 Negro male servants. Then there were 1,659 Negro male clerks outside of clerks in stores. These occupations include 55 per cent of the total number of male Negro workers in the City of Chicago, as compared with less than 10 per cent of the white male breadwinners.

That the extensive employment of Negroes as laborers or semi-skilled operatives in the stockyards, slaughter houses, steel mills, and building trades, and as general laborers is a recent development, is shown by the fact that the percentage of Negroes in the total number of males employed in these occupations in Chicago increased from 3.5 in 1910 to 20.7 in 1920. Of the laborers in the automobile plants of Detroit, 13.5 per cent were Negroes in 1920, as compared with less than one-half of 1 per cent in 1910. The proportion of Negroes among building and general laborers in that city increased from 3.2 per cent in 1910 to 19.4 per cent in 1920, the number of Negroes so employed increasing from 149 to 1,261.

In New York the percentage of Negroes in the total number of longshoremen and stevedores increased from 6.4 in 1910 to 14.5 in 1920; and in Philadelphia it increased from 44.7 per cent in 1910 to 59.2 in 1920. It is of interest to note that while in each of these cities there was a large increase in the number of Negroes employed as chauffeurs, the increase no more than kept pace with the growth of the occupation, so that the percentage of Negroes was no larger in 1920 than it was in 1910. But the absolute number of Negro chauffeurs in New York increased from 490 to 2,373, and in Philadelphia from 312 to 2,195.

In contrast to the increasing extent to which Negroes are being employed as laborers in the manufacturing plants or industries of the North is the very slight increase in the employment of male Negroes in domestic and personal service. Of the total number of janitors, porters, male servants, and waiters in Chicago 33.9 per cent were Negroes in 1910, and in 1920 this percentage had increased only to 34.8.

All this goes to show that the male Negroes who have recently been migrating northward in such large numbers have most of them become industrial laborers, finding employment in mills, factories, and stockyards, rather than in hotels, restaurants, office buildings, and dwelling houses. I am sure that if we could distinguish in the census occupational statistics those who have emigrated recently from the earlier emigrants, this fact would be brought out very strikingly. It is another distinctive feature of the new immigration.

#### Negro Women in Domestic Service

The statistics relating to male Negro workers indicate that new fields of employment have been opened to them in the North, which doubtless invite immigration by the lure of high money wages. This does not appear to be true to the same extent of the female Negro workers. Their field of employment in the North continues to be largely restricted to personal and domestic service.

In the case of the Negro male workers in Chicago, the percentage employed in personal and domestic service fell off from 52.5 per cent to 28.1, and in the case of female workers from 84.5 to 64.2

Of the Negro women who have migrated to northern cities a large proportion are domestic servants. About 30 per cent of the Negro female breadwinners in Chicago were reported as servants and 47 per cent of those in New York. For

Philadelphia the percentage is 54, for Detroit 35, and for Pittsburgh 50. In general from one-third to one-half of the total number of Negro women workers in northern cities are servants.

It may be noted in this connection that the total number of female servants of all classes, white and colored, as reported by the census decreased materially in the last decade, the number being 1,012,133 in 1920 as compared with 1,309,549 in 1910, a decrease of about 23 per cent or nearly one-fourth. In New York City the number of female servants fell off from 113,409 in 1910 to 84,615 in 1920; in Chicago the decrease was from 34,472 in 1910 to 26,184 in 1920; in Philadelphia it was nearly the same--from 37,050 to 28,290. Evidently people are learning to do without domestic servants. I shall not stop to inquire how. But doubtless the increasing resort to the simplified housekeeping of the apartment furnishes a partial explanation of this phenomenon. In the meantime, white female servants in northern cities are to a large extent being supplanted or replaced by Negroes. For while the number of white female servants, foreign born as well as native, has decreased, the number of Negro female servants has materially increased, so that they form an increasing proportion or percentage of the diminishing total. Thus in Chicago in 1920, 24 per cent or about one-fourth of the female servants were Negroes as compared with 10 per cent in 1910. In New York the percentage Negro in the total number of female servants increased from 12.4 in 1910 to 22.4 in 1920; in Detroit from 6.1 to 23.1; in Cleveland from 8.7 to 30.1; in Philadelphia from 38.5 to 53.8 per cent. And there are similar increases in the percentages for all the northern cities to which Negroes have migrated in considerable numbers.

Thus it becomes evident that in the North the southern Negro is to a certain extent supplying the places of the foreign-born immigrant as a source of labor supply for both industrial plants and domestic kitchens, but only to a limited extent. The falling off in the flow of foreign immigration caused by restrictive laws can never be offset or made good by immigration from the South. For consider: In the last 10 years of unrestricted immigration, by which I mean the years 1905 to 1914, inclusive, more than 10,000,000 foreign immigrants came to these shores. That exceeds the entire Negro population of the South by about 1,000,000. At present the restriction law limits the annual immigration to 357,000. So the maximum possible immigration of the foreign born in a decade is 3,570,000. The difference between this number and the 10,000,000 that came in when immigration was unrestricted would absorb 72 per cent of the entire Negro population of the southern states (8,912,231).

#### Natural Increase of Negro Population in the North

Will the colored people in the North multiply by natural increase or are they dependent upon continuous immigration from the South? In other words, if immigration were to cease would the Negro race in the North gradually die out? This is a very fundamental question. If the race can not maintain itself in the North save by continuous recruiting from the South, then immigration acts as a drain upon the Negro population and if it were to continue in large volume it might in the distant future even prove to be the destruction of the Negro race. I do not suggest this, however, as a catastrophe that is likely to be realized. It may be a possibility, but if so it lies beyond the range of any predictable future.

Whether the Negro race can maintain itself in the North by natural increase remains to be seen. We can inquire only as to present tendencies. Professor Willcox in a recently published article on the "Increase and Distribution of Negroes in the United States" pointed out that in those states in the North for which statistics were available there had been within a period of five years 114 deaths of Negroes to 100 births. The area included the New England states, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Minnesota, and the period covered the years 1914 to 1919 inclusive. Conditions within that period could hardly be called normal. It was the period of the World War, of the influenza epidemic, and the period within which the first northward rush of Negroes took place.

The statistics of more recent years show a different relationship. For within these same states, the number of deaths of Negroes to 100 births in the three years, 1920 to 1922, inclusive, was 83. The birth rate for the Negro, however, remains lower in the North than it is in the South and the

death rate continues to be higher in the North, and that means, of course, that the natural increase in the North is less than it is in the South; and it seems fairly evident that the northward migration of the Negroes has retarded the increase of the Negro population and constitutes one reason, and perhaps the main reason, why the increase recorded at the last census was smaller than ever before, being, in fact, only 6.5 per cent as compared with 11.2 per cent in the preceding decade and with 13.8 per cent (corrected figure) in the decade before that. But these conditions may be only temporary. The death rate in the North may decline with improvement in living conditions, sanitation, and personal hygiene--and with adaptation to climate. The birth rate might increase if conditions among Negroes in the North become more settled and family life better established. And the northward migration itself may be only temporary. These are questions the answer to which the future alone will reveal.

#### Resumé

I am aware that the statistics presented within the brief limits of this paper can serve only as an introduction to the subject of Negro migration. They indicate the recent great increase of migration, the fact that this recent migration comes largely from the cotton states of the far South, that it is a migration to the cities of the North and to the industrial plants in these cities, that it is replacing to a limited extent the immigration from Europe, and that it is probably retarding the growth of the Negro population. But as to what the effects of this movement are going to be upon the Negro, or upon the North or upon the South--these are profoundly interesting and more or less speculative questions which I could not undertake to discuss within the limits of this paper, whatever my qualifications for that task might be.

*Opportunity*, 2 (April, 1924): 100-105.

#### 8. AN EXPERIMENT WITH NEGRO LABOR

J. W. Knapp

*Personnel Director, Bethlehem Steel Corporation*

The Employment Manager is one of the most important factors in successful Industrial Relations. He must be a man of wide experience, good judgment, and infinite patience, and must surround himself with Assistants of as near the same qualities as possible, since it is manifestly impossible for the Manager, except in the smaller plants, to come in personal contact with all the applicants.

It is of great importance further that those assistants who come in close contact with the applicant once he has become an employee, be specially picked for personality or "mixability," or whatever name we care to call it, in addition to the special qualifications required for their calling, whether Community Workers, Instructors or nurses.

Illustrating what is most undesirable in a Welfare Worker of any kind, I shall draw upon an incident coming within my experiences:

In the early days of Negro employees in the department with which I am connected, a matter of only some six years ago, we, in our ignorance and inexperience, picked a "go-getter" out of a gang, and made him a pusher or "straw-boss," so called, thinking that the men would rather work under one of their own race. Things went along all right for a short time, and we were congratulating ourselves on our good judgment, when we noticed that the gang was decreasing in size, invariably by the quit route. Anxious to find the trouble I questioned the next man appearing with a quit slip, and elicited the information they could not get along with the "pusher."

That we at the Duquesne Steel Works have been successful in this phase of Industrial Relations, may be gathered from the following brief resumé of our efforts along these lines.

Prior to 1916, we were able to recruit our labor supply from the American

white and several foreign groups. However, in the early part of 1916, it developed that white labor was diminishing rapidly as immigration from foreign countries had practically ceased.

This condition was met in part by the migration of the Southern Negro into Northern Industry.

Many of these new workers were entirely unfitted to meet the new demands of Northern Industry. Coming as they did from rural agricultural sections of the South, bringing with them their old traditions and superstitions, they presented to us many new community problems. Owing to this condition, we felt it necessary in the early part of 1918 to put on a colored Welfare Worker, as we were of the opinion that through him, in conjunction with the Employment Manager, we could gain better results from our colored workmen, which has proven true beyond any doubt.

The Company's policy relative to the colored welfare work is to have it conducted through the office of the Employment Manager. With this arrangement, it can be easily seen that the success or failure of this work depends largely on the team work between the Employment Manager and the Welfare Worker. No program worked out would be of any value unless there were confidence, understanding and general interest on the part of the Employment Manager.

This has been one of the gratifying results of our work, and if we have done anything at all, it has been through this perfect understanding, and it has been through this relationship that we have been able to get over to the worker, very often, many of the policies of the Company.

The Welfare Worker has given us insight into what we term the peculiarities of their race, that perhaps otherwise, could never have been understood. We seek information regarding the employees that will be to their benefit both on and off the job. We, therefore, want the worker to feel free to come to us whenever he so desires.

One of the many successful efforts has been the investigating of our men off duty, through the Welfare Worker. By this means we are able to catch up the loafer, thus ridding the community of undesirables, as well as to render aid many times to our workmen who are detained home on account of sickness of self or family. It has been our policy since the introduction of colored labor, to encourage married men to bring their families to Duquesne, rendering such financial aid as necessary to accomplish this end. Through our Welfare Worker, we were able also to trace out disorderly houses and close them up promptly.

Fortunately we secured the services of a very efficient nurse, and through her aid discovered several cases of men and women who were living together as man and wife when in reality they were not married. Upon being notified of these discoveries we succeeded in rectifying these cases by insisting that the parties be legally married. I might add that this nurse and another secured at the time, did yeoman service during the "Flu" epidemic and won the gratitude of the community at large.

Two years ago we organized day and night classes for our colored employees in our Welfare Community House. The work of these classes has been successful beyond all expectations, and is due largely to the untiring efforts to Mr. Macon Lennon, our supervisor of the Community House.

In the late fall we arranged weekly meetings in the Community House with the assistant Department Superintendents as speakers. These meetings were mostly get-together meetings that the speakers might explain more fully to the employees, the various conditions of his department, as well as to impress on the worker that the loafer or drone must go. It was surprising how largely these meetings were attended, and the results accomplished. We feel our responsibility to the men who come here, and are ready to help them to help themselves in a practical way. It is this idea that we are striving to drive home to our employees through the co-operative efforts of the welfare workers and the employment manager.

Another important factor, and I might call it a vital factor in successful Industrial Relations, is the Foreman, and his attitude towards the colored workman. At the start it was not at all uncommon to hear a Foreman say, "I got a couple more of those niggers in my gang today." This is a far cry indeed from the remark of a Foreman only the other day: "I wish I had about a dozen more in my crew like that colored fellow, John Rivers."

Another incident--A colored man named Thompson, working in a semi-skilled position, left us during the hard times to go to his home in the South. Recently the furnace man with whom he worked, a white man, told our General

Foreman that he had a letter from Thompson asking if he could get his job back if he came up. The General Foreman said: "Tell him yes, and if he knows any more like himself bring them along." He, by the way, started to work last Friday night and he brought three men along with him.

It must of course be understood that these men are good sober conscientious workmen, and we have many more like them. This class is accepted by the foremen and white workmen without prejudice, and it is from them that we have developed skilled and semi-skilled workmen.

The department with which I am connected, the Open Hearth, employs approximately 20 per cent of the total plant employees; but mark this, that 20 per cent includes between 45 and 50 per cent of the colored employees of the entire plant, so that our experience has been as great as all of the other departments combined.

Color alone has been and is no bar to advancement--probably not over 20 per cent of the colored men in our department are laborers, the rest having advanced to the position of second and third helpers on furnaces, gas makers, and ash hoppermen in the Gas Producer Plant, narrow gauge railroad switchmen, ladle liners, etc., and will continue to advance as long as they merit advancement.

This type of man presents no problem. He is ambitious, works steadily, saves some money, and is in general a credit to the community, and I want to say right here that his loyalty to the company for which he works is second to none.

Our problem is with the other fellow, of whom there are numerous varieties. The one who can't get along with his foreman. A shift to another foreman sometimes satisfies him, or to another kind of work; then again it takes a shift to another department to do it. If that does not work, there is something wrong with the man and we usually have to let him go. We have in some cases tried as many as eight different lines of work where the man showed a willingness to work but lacked adaptability, before landing on a job that the man could handle.

Then there is the one who seemingly has no cares in the world, the least being his work. Once in awhile, a heart to heart talk does a world of good, but in most cases it is hopeless and he soon drifts away if not discharged.

Another is the fellow who works well, but has the lay off habit--particularly around pay day. This is usually a hard case to combat. He promises not to do it again, but as a rule soon lapses as the money starts to burn a hole in his pocket. He always wonders why he is passed up when a better job is open.

Another type is the fellow who is a good worker but has to go down home every so often, "To see about some business," said business usually consisting of showing off his good clothes and air of prosperity to the folks around home. In my experience with this type, I cannot recall a single one who did not find it necessary to draw all his pay and have his employment record terminated before going. He also wonders why advancement does not come to him. Of course the man who has a legitimate reason, has no trouble in getting a leave of absence: it in no way mitigates against his advancement, and he usually has the money to go with.

We have several off on leave at the present time. One bringing a bride back with him. Another whose wife is dangerously ill after an operation. Another who, although his own family is here, is now bringing his father and mother up. Another, a fine old character who went to Birmingham to dispose of some property, as both he and his wife want to spend the rest of their days in the North.

Another type, the vicious bad actor. We have fortunately had very little experience with him. The few we have had were disposed of summarily as soon as they showed their real character. We are not attempting to operate a reform school.

As you will have noticed, I have covered the good, the bad and the indifferent, generally speaking, and while unfortunately the majority of those with whom we have come in contact have belonged to the last two classes, this is not as discouraging to the careful observer as it seems.

All things are comparative, including majorities, and this majority at the present time is small compared to the past, and we can feel assured that in the years to come the positions will be reversed. Now what is, and will be responsible for this? Call it increased efficiency, for want of a better name--



a change in the state of mind,--a dawning of the day of opportunity, and recognition of it and its possibilities--a determination to have a real share in the world's work, and the feeling that there are commensurate rewards for personal effort. All these may be brought about by the work of intelligently functioning organizations, coupled with the efforts of our industrial leaders to assure to all a square deal regardless of race, color or creed.

*Opportunity*, 1 (February, 1923): 19-20.

## 9. THE NEGRO IN CHICAGO INDUSTRIES

By William L. Evans

*Industrial Secretary, Chicago Urban League*

Since the disastrous industrial depression, there has been much conjecture about the Negro's place in industry. Has he maintained the places held by him prior to 1920? Was his place in northern industry only a war measure? Did employers take advantage of the recent period of depression to eliminate him, or has he taken advantage of his opportunities in the north?

We want to answer these questions only as they apply to Chicago, leaving it to those better informed than we are to speak for other places.

The Chicago Urban League may speak perhaps with some degree of authority on these questions because its industrial department is the largest placement agency of colored workers in the city. In the month of September, 1922, on a short labor market it placed in Chicago nearly 1,300 men and women job seekers and interviewed 2,745. In twelve months ending October 31, it has had 38,207 applicants for work and placed 10,720 people in profitable employment. It has contact with practically all the principal industries employing colored people through its field worker. It investigates complaints of working people and seeks opportunities in industry not previously open to colored people. During the period of unemployment, the League dealt with problems growing out of the enforced idleness of 20,000 colored people, and at the same time used its influence to see that colored workers were "laid off" only in proportion to white employes. This contact should, at least, qualify the Urban League to respond with some degree of intelligence to the above queries.

The problem of the colored worker in Chicago is a complex one. His industrial background would hardly permit automatic adjustment to a situation so new and so different from anything in his previous experience. His adjustment to plant and shop, then, was attended with difficulty requiring patience and intelligence. He had the barrier of race prejudice to overcome which sometimes resulted in his undoing. Wartime production gave him a place--did he keep it? In most instances, yes, there can be no doubt that he lost positions of skill in one place only to gain them in others. For instance skilled positions were lost to colored men in the steel mills in the period of depression following the armistice, but were recovered during the steel strike of a year later. In the Stock Yards colored men also lost positions of skill, only to recover them during the strike of 1920-21 and gain others they had never had. The great strike of 1919 and 1920 headed by John Kilkuski was lost by Polish workers, but resulted in promotions from unskilled to skilled positions in the plants of the International Harvester Company, Corn Products & Refining Company, and many other industries which are still held by colored men.

Today the grey iron industry insofar as molding is concerned, is practically all in the hands of colored men. Foundry after foundry has introduced the colored molder and when the white molder objects and leaves, the colored man gets control and keeps it. Colored foremen over men of their own race are not uncommon.

The strike of the Stock Yards Union offered a chance for occupational advancement to colored men which was accepted. Carpenters, electricians, and steam fitters positions were given colored men, but were soon lost, in most instances, to returning strikers. Employers gave reason for this as lack of experience on the part of the colored men. A few, however, have held on so that the result is not a complete loss to the colored worker. The Landis

Award Committee sought him wherever he could be found. Bricklayers, carpenters, hoisting engineers, cement workers, and other tradesmen were placed with the committee. Colored tradesmen may now be seen working side by side with whites in all sections of Chicago--in some cases as union workers, in others, on the open-shop plan, while previously he worked only as a member of the Building Laborers and Hod Carriers Union.

The recent strike of the railroad shop employees has, like all the others, brought advantages to colored workmen. Skilled positions formerly closed to him are now his. While no figures are available, it is known that many are working as boiler-makers, steam-fitters, carpenters and painters, in shops of Chicago.

Similar advantages to the colored workman may be shown from every industrial dispute where colored persons are not members of the striking unions. There is no reason to conclude that the Negro is by choice a strikebreaker any more than other men, but the fact is that in most instances where he has risen above the ranks of a common laborer, the strike has furnished the medium thru which his advancement is accomplished. To our notion, the policy of white unionists is more to blame than all else. White unionists must sooner or later realize that their own security consists in the acceptance on equal terms of the colored workman. When he is a member of the union, the colored man is as loyal as any other, but like others he must be shown that his best interest is in the union rather than out.

The writer recently heard a colored stock yards union workman bitterly denouncing the Urban League and the Y.M.C.A. for what he thought was their interference in the stock yards strike. His denunciation was as bitter and typically union as any the writer has ever heard, but the writer knew that with 20,000 Negroes unemployed over a period of a year in a great city like Chicago where at all times the struggle for existence is keen, that the calling of a strike was pure folly and that no force, social or otherwise, could have saved the situation to the union. If the statements of stock yards officials may be accepted, the strike-breakers were about equally divided between white and colored men who preferred the danger of a strike-breaker's position to the suffering incident to unemployment.

Employers did not take the recent depression period as an opportunity to drive the colored men out of industry. When it became necessary to reduce working forces, colored men suffered only a proportionate "lay off." A few instances were recorded on the other hand which showed an increase of colored employees. Early in 1922 officials of the stock yards reported from 25 to 30 per cent increase in colored employees, while recent reports show this proportion remaining about the same.

In September, a conference was held in the office of one of the large steel plants on the subject of increasing its colored working force. Here the increase was from less than 100 in 1914 to 900 in 1922. A large cement factory has increased its force from a few in 1916 to 800 in 1922. There are several others which will register similar increases. On the other hand, we know of not a single instance in which an industry has been lost to colored workers, with the exception of Sears Roebuck and Company and Montgomery Ward & Company where 2,000 colored girls were employed as clerks typists and operators. These two firms have not recovered from the depression period. One promises to reemploy its colored force if business justifies the re-opening of its branch office. As neither company has re-opened its branch office, it cannot be said that these companies have been lost. At least, the colored workers have not been replaced, which leaves the decision to some future day.

Colored women have gained even more than the men. They have not only held all gains they made during the past four years in industry, but have successfully invaded and held new territory. Today they are a real factor in the needle trades and must be counted by the thousand. Though segregated, they are working in every branch of the trade from overalls to costly silk gowns. They have proven competent in the arts of beading and embroidering. They are decorators of parchment shades. Three hundred and fifty may be found in a single plant, while many plants have more than a hundred in skilled occupations. They are both union and non-union. Hundreds of others are in the packing industry on skilled and unskilled jobs. One large foundry employs 50 as core makers where they work without friction with twice as many white women.

The garment workers unions accept colored women without discrimination

and have even made feeble attempts to unionize them. Most of the inter-racial shops are union. Colored women are generally non-union. They have not as yet, learned the value of collective bargaining and are generally underpaid. Often their apprentice weekly wage is \$7.00 to \$9.00, at which they are unfairly held for unreasonable periods by unscrupulous employers. There is not much doubt that colored women, in most cases, represent "cheap" labor. Whenever they are well-paid, they are cheerful and dependable, when working for less than a living wage, they are restless and unreliable. In a certain factory in which the management had declared their colored girls unreliable, it was found that if a girl ever reached the earning power of \$15.00 per week, she usually became a satisfactory worker. Fifteen-dollars a week is the minimum upon which a woman living in Chicago may be self-supporting. Thus their unreliability is easily explained. Those falling below fifteen dollars produce a high and expensive turn-over. The dependability then of colored girl workers depends at least in some measure, on her chance to earn a living wage. Is this not true of all workers regardless of sex or race?

Many employers are beginning to see that industrial efficiency is not confined to the white race. Proof of this is shown in the thousands of colored workers and the demand for more which cannot be met. Even while writing this article there comes a call for 75 young colored women to work as merchandise inspectors in one of Chicago's largest department stores. Another company manufacturing spring cushions has increased its colored women employees from 25 to 350 in four years and has recently engaged a well-trained colored woman as welfare secretary with supervisory power over all its colored workers and announces its intention of increasing its present force from 350 to 600 in the near future. These instances serve to demonstrate the colored woman's possibilities in industry. In Chicago she has but taken her place in the cycle of nationalities which have been assigned to drudgery of industry. The Irish had their day, then the Greek, the Pole and the Jew each in their turn. Each has passed on to the better tasks in industry but not without an encounter with race prejudice. Anti-race sentiment has not been directed to the Negro alone. The colored woman is slowly but surely beating down color prejudice and taking her place as a factor in industry. Her future, if judged by her present status in industry, would seem to indicate her permanency as a factor in the producing forces of Chicago.

Finally, we would say that Negroes have taken advantage of their opportunities in industry, at least in Chicago. They have retained successfully most of the gains made during war times, steadily advancing from unskilled to skilled positions in spite of handicaps which are not known to white workers. Most of them are still common laborers, just as all the late-comers in industry have been. The last to arrive in northern territory, they, like others, must begin at the bottom. The Irish, the Greek, the Italian, the Croation and the Pole and finally the Negro has followed in succession as the man farthest down in industry. The payrolls of a local industry showed 40 nationalities which conveys some idea of the polyglot man-power of Chicago industries. We wonder if the Mexican will be the next? There is some reason to think so.

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#### 10. NEGROES AT WORK IN BALTIMORE, MD.

(A Summary of the Report on the Industrial Survey of the Negro Population)

By Charles S. Johnson<sup>6</sup>

*Director, Research and Investigations*

Maryland is one of the border states, neither north nor south. In any consideration of questions involving Baltimore Negroes or inter-racial relations this is important. In its industrial development Baltimore is northern; in its social customs it is more southern than Virginia, for example. Because of its geographical location, its industrial dependence upon the south, its attachment to southern customs, a peculiar situation has developed. There are to be found strange mixtures of sentiments, methods and customs. This

geographical position it would seem, has tended to exaggerate differences and keep racial issues more prominently in the foreground. These relations are perhaps, more tedious than they are either in the north or in the south, because they are less fixed.

This situation was observed by Mr. Allison Muir, personnel executive of the General Electric Company of the city and an adviser to the Government on labor questions. Mr. Muir said:

"The nearer you get to the Mason and Dixon Line the harder you find it to mix whites and Negroes on the job. Both further North and further South it is different. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, Negroes are doing skilled work in the locomotive works, in Newport News in the shipyards and in Birmingham they are preferred to the 'poor white trash.' But in Baltimore the white workers demand separation in everything."

It will be remembered that it is principally in border states like Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland that the necessity has been felt for being explicit on absolute segregation in residential areas, enforcing the issue with an ordinance. It is perhaps because the question of contact is so frequently in the foreground that there has been built up a wall of defense against the idea. This is most strikingly apparent throughout the entire field of industry, and it was considered best to mention it at this point in order that the results of the inquiry may be more intelligible.

The same reticence about inter-racial contact expressed in the pronounced demand for separation has retarded contacts of acknowledged value to both races even further south. Until very recently the occasions on which whites and Negroes came together for a discussion of mutual problems have been rare and outside the popular estimate of good taste. The sentiments of the far south have been there, but without the sympathy frequently manifested by certain of the influential white leaders of that section. White persons as a rule, do not attend the meetings of Negroes, even to hear them sing,—one never failing resource of the Negroes further south. Similarly, it is extremely rare that Negroes get an opportunity to attend the meetings of the whites, hear their deliberations and profit from them. The backwardness of the Negro group in social welfare programs may be in large measure attributed to this isolation.

#### Early Occupations of Negroes

As in the more southern states just before and for a period after the Civil War, there were occupations, which prevailing custom decreed belonged to the Negroes' status. In Baltimore these occupations were principally brick making in Summer, oyster shucking in Winter, caulking, loading and unloading ships, personal and domestic service. Some of the best known caterers were Negroes and there were other owners of fair sized produce stores patronized by whites. They also did the jobbing and independent trucking and controlled the junk business. A few were skilled workers in carpentry, masonry, and blacksmithing. But rather profound changes came shortly after the Civil War, and the most important of these were a result of the competition of white workers.

In northern cities the chief supply of labor for unskilled work are the foreigners who as late as 1914 were coming to this country at the rate of over a million a year. These crude laborers in large centers usually pushed up the native born American workers into more select grades of work. In southern cities like Birmingham, Richmond, Virginia, Atlanta, Georgia, and Charleston, S.C., the influence of the slave caste work has not yet worn off and Negroes still to a very large degree do the hard work much of which is skilled. Their competition has been with the "poor whites" and in this they have had a relative advantage by virtue of the same caste lines dividing the poor whites from the "landed gentry." As anyone familiar with the history of the south knows, this social demarcation was of sufficient strength to encourage "poor whites" in avoiding positions that classed them with Negroes. Again, the preponderant Negro laboring population in these southern cities made them in large measure an indispensable labor supply, strengthening their position against the "poor white" through an implied association of manual labor with Negroes and even with slavery.

In Maryland no such preponderance has obtained. Since 1810, the per cent of Negroes to whites has steadily and rapidly decreased without a single

fluctuation by decades. Compared with the southern states in question this decline in ratio is most remarkable. Neither this state nor its principal city, Baltimore, was as deeply impressed with the occupational distinctions further south. Being a border state these relations were not as definitely isolated. Besides, Maryland, as well as Baltimore, has always had a large native white immobile laboring class in need of work.

#### Population and Competition

Baltimore has a population of 733,836, more than half the population of Maryland, and is its only large city. It ranks eighth among the country's largest cities, seventh in the major group of leading American cities in the number of its manufactures, and is naturally endowed for commercial and industrial development. In local commercial circles it is referred to as "The Gateway to the South."

One of the chief attractions, according to the local Board of Trade, is the fact that labor is plentiful and cheap. During the war, for example, one plant was able to expand its force from 600 to 2,200. This is most significant from the point of view of competition for jobs. Its population is more stable than perhaps any other industrial city. Forty-six and three-tenths per cent of the entire population are home owners. This is the second highest percentage of home owners in the country. There is a preponderance of women which means that more women are in the labor market in competition with men for work.

In Baltimore's Negro population there is something peculiarly significant. It ranks fifth among cities with a Negro population of more than 75,000, but the proportion to the total is smaller than any northern city. The 1920 census reports 108,390 Negroes in a total of 733,826, or 14.8 per cent. The per cent of the Negro population in Richmond, Virginia, is 31.5; in Birmingham, Alabama, 39.31; in Atlanta, 31.3, and in Memphis, 37.7. Of northern cities: in Chicago it is 4.1; in New York City, 2.7; in Pittsburgh, 6.4, and in Philadelphia, 7.4. The Baltimore Negro population therefore, is just large enough to be a factor in the social structure of the city, but not quite large enough to constitute an independent support for the city's industrial structure as they do further south.

The struggle for existence in the Negro group registers first and most prominently in the number of Negroes at work. They represent the largest element of the population gainfully employed.

#### Professional Service:

Type of Occupation	No. Male Negroes Engaged	No. Female Negroes Engaged	Total
Actors and Showmen	31		31
Authors, Editors, etc.	6		6
Chemists, Assayers, Metallurgists	4		4
Civil Engineers & Surveyors	2		2
Clergymen	187		187
Dentists	24		24
Draftsmen	1		1
Electrical Engineers	1		1
Lawyers	27		27
Musicians and Teachers of Music	142	41	183
Photographers	13		13
Physicians and Surgeons	107		107
Religious, charity and welfare workers		21	21
Teachers	53	396	449
Trained nurses		41	41
All other occupations	62	44	106
TOTAL	660	543	1203

## Entrepreneurs:

Type of Occupation	No. Male Negroes Engaged	No. Female Negroes Engaged	Total
Builders and Building Contractors	34		34
Commercial Brokers and Commercial Men	3		3
Jewelers, etc.	10		10
Manufacturers	8		8
Commercial Travelers	10		10
Milliners and Millinery dealers		9	9
Proprietors and Manager Transfer Cos.	47		47
Real Estate Agents and Officials	18		18
Restaurant, Cafe and Lunchroom Keepers	91	90	181
Retail Dealers	519	78	597
Saloon Keepers	5		5
Wholesale Dealers	5		5
TOTAL	750	177	927

## Managers and Foremen:

Captains, Masters, etc.	28		28
Foremen and Overseers (Manufacturing)	74		74
Foremen and Overseers (Other Trans.)	30		30
Foremen and Overseers (Steam R.R.)	10		10
Forewomen and Overseers		14	14
Inspectors	2		2
Managers and Superintendents	1		1
Officials of Insurance Companies	4		4
Official (Manufacturing)	1		1
Proprietors, Office Managers	7		7
United States Officials	5		5
TOTAL	162	14	176

## Clerical Workers:

Agents	3		3
Bookkeepers and Cashiers	16	39	55
Canvassers	12		12
Clerks (Except in Stores)	282	79	361
Clerks in Stores	76	26	102
Collectors	23		23
Messengers, bundle and office girls		16	16
Insurance Agents	41		41
Salesmen	81		81
Saleswomen		40	40
Stenographers and Typists	4	31	35
Telephone Operators		13	13
All other clerical operators		5	5
TOTAL	538	249	787

## Skilled Workers:

Bakers	39		39
Blacksmiths	37		37
Brakemen	10		10
Brick and Stone Masons	43		43
Boiler Makers	7		7
Cabinet Makers	10		10
Carpenters	191		191

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Type of Occupation	No. Male Negroes Engaged	No. Female Negroes Engaged	Total
Skilled Workers, Cont'd.:			
Compositors, etc.	26		26
Conductors (Steam R.R.)	2		2
Coopers	16		16
Cranemen, Derrickmen, etc.	95		95
Dressmakers and Seamstresses		661	661
Electricians	15		15
Engineers (Stationary)	96		96
Firemen (except Locomotive and Fire Dept.)	545		545
Furnace Men, etc.	44		44
Guards	86		86
Iron Molders	120		120
Locomotive Engineers	2		2
Locomotive Firemen	31		31
Machinists	109		109
Mail Carriers	80		80
Mechanics	122		122
Painters, Glaziers, etc. (Bldg.)	84		84
Painters, Glaziers, etc. (Factory)	15		15
Paper Hangers	15		15
Plasterers, Cement, etc.	115		115
Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters	37		37
Policemen	3		3
Shoemakers and Cobblers	47		47
Structural Iron Workers	40		40
Switchmen and Flagmen	8		8
Tailors	130		130
Tailoresses		13	13
Telegraph Operators	2		2
Tinsmiths	7		7
Upholsterers	31		31
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	2260	674	2944
Apprentices			
Extraction of Minerals	23		23
	97		97
Semi-Skilled Workers: (Manufacturing Industries)			
Blast Furnaces, etc.	119		119
Broom and Brush Factories	60		60
Candy Factories	15	13	28
Car and Railroad Shops	24		24
Chemical and Allied Industries	78	6	84
Cigar and Tobacco	15	182	197
Furniture Factories	37		37
Glass Factories	45		45
Food Industries		33	33
Iron and Steel Industries		13	13
Ship and Boat Building	262		262
Other Food Industries	212	343	555
Other Clothing Industries	258	241	499
Other Metal Industries	19		19
Other Industries	287	315	602
Other Iron and Structural Industries	114		114
Printing, Publishing, etc.	20	8	28
Shoe Factories	11		11
Slaughter and Packing Houses	86		86
Shirt, Collar and Cuff	22	427	449
Straw Factories		18	18
Suit, Coat, etc.	119	244	363

Type of Occupation	No. Male Negroes Engaged	No. Female Negroes Engaged	Total
Semi-Skilled Workers, Contd.:			
Textile Industries: Cotton Mills		53	53
Other Textile Industries		44	44
Tinware, etc.	30		30
TOTAL	1833	1940	3773
Domestic and Personal Service:			
Barbers, Hairdressers, Manicurists	291	224	515
Bartenders	54		54
Boarding and Lodging House Keepers		112	112
Chauffeurs	1831		1831
Charwomen and Cleaners		243	243
Elevator Tenders	178		178
Housekeepers and Stewardesses	212		212
Janitors and Sextons	884	198	1082
Laundresses (Not in laundries)		7716	7716
Laundry Operatives	117	733	850
Messengers	336		336
Porters and Helpers in Stores	1602		1602
Porters (Except in Stores)	1299		1299
Servants	1876	12333	14209
Nurses (Not trained)		150	150
Waiters	1476		1476
Waitresses		746	746
All other occupations	640	185	825
TOTAL	10796	22640	33436
Unskilled Workers:			
Blast Furnace and Steel Rolling Mills	1024		1024
Brick, Tile, Terra Cotta Factories	265		265
Building (General)	4879		4879
Car and Railroad Shops	55		55
Copper Factories	145		145
Fertilizer Factories	919		919
Gas Works	172		172
Glass Factories	167		167
Helpers in Bldg. and Hand Trades	459		459
Laborers		14	14
Lumber and Furniture Industries	144		144
Other Chemical and Allied Industries	510		510
Other Industries	1089		1089
Other Food Industries	302		302
Petroleum Refineries	81		81
Ship and Boat Builders	1008		1008
Slaughter and Packing Houses	216		216
Textile Industries	53		53
Tinware, etc. Factories	123		123
Other Iron and Steel Industries	483		483
All other occupations		314	314
TOTAL	12094	328	12422
Unskilled Laborers Transportation:			
Deliverymen	819		819
Laborers (Coal Yards)	341		341
Laborers (Elevators, etc.)	303		303
Laborers (Lumber Yards)	298		298



Type of Occupation	No. Male Negroes Engaged	No. Female Negroes Engaged	Total
Unskilled Laborers Transportation Cont'd.			
Newsboys	71		71
Other Transportation Industries	311		311
Road and Street Building, etc.	1412		1412
Sailors and Deck Hands	373		373
Steam Railroad	721		721
Stevedores	3151		3151
Teamsters and Draymen	1712		1712
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	9512		9512

## Public Service:

Laborers	491		491
Farm Laborers	114		114
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	605		605

In two principal lines of work it will be observed that Negroes are practically in control. These are (1) Domestic and Personal Service in which field they furnish 65.6 per cent of the workers, and (2) "Unskilled Labor," where in spite of their 14.8 per cent in the total population they contribute 47.0 per cent of all the unskilled laborers. This differentiation is still more clearly apparent in certain specific positions. Seventy per cent of all the building and repair laborers; 64 per cent of all the unskilled laborers in blast furnaces and steel rolling mills; 71.8 per cent of all the porters in stores; and 92.5 per cent of all other porters; 78 per cent of the waiters; and 73 per cent of the stevedores are Negroes.

A comparison of these figures with those of 1910, show rather significant fluctuations when their relation to the total Negro working force is considered. Sixty-four per cent of all Negro workers were engaged in domestic and personal service in 1910, but in 1920, the per cent dropped to 50. On the other hand, in 1910 the total of all Negro skilled workers was 3.8 per cent of all Negroes working. In 1920, they had increased to 5.3 per cent indicating a gradual but perceptible drift from domestic and personal service to the industries.

Where certain industries, for any reason whatever, do not employ Negroes in their manufacturing processes almost invariably Negro porters and janitors are to be found. Employers with the most pronounced objections to Negro workers in plants employing whites because of the contact involved, do not object to these Negro porters, cleaners and janitors. It is an established custom that seems never to have been seriously questioned.

The situation is similar in domestic service in which field, 33,436 Negroes out of a total of 50,446 are employed.

## The Intensive Survey

The intensive survey limited itself to one special field--that of industry. This, it was felt, was a subject about which least was known and in the improvement of which there was most likelihood of inter-racial cooperation. There was available no complete list of the industries of Baltimore; there were partial lists of industries and rather complete lists of business enterprises which included many industries. These were provided for the purpose of the Survey by the Industrial Bureau of the Baltimore Board of Trade and the Merchants and Manufacturers Association together with a letter to the managers of the establishments in question commending the purposes of the Survey and requesting their cooperation in providing the information sought.

There are, according to the 1920 Census, 2,787 manufacturers, large and small, in Baltimore employing 97,814 wage earners. It was found, however, that there were numbers of establishments not classed as manufacturing (public utilities, railroads, etc.) which employed large numbers of men, white and Negro. There was further no means of determining which plants employed Negroes. This made necessary the visiting of a sufficiently large

number to include the bulk of Negro workers engaged in the industries of the city. A selection of 300 of the most important plants was made with the assistance of the two organizations above. The returns indicate that these were representative. Employed in the establishments from which reports were obtained were 51,016 persons, of whom 6,525 were Negroes. If the Census figures of persons engaged in manufacturing industries are used as a guide, the number of workers included in this study is 52 per cent of all industrial workers. The overlapping mentioned above, however, must be discounted.

There are 120 labor organizations in the city. All of these were reached, but information on the subject secured from but 40.

Those, however, include all the trades in which Negroes are engaged to any extent and may be thus deemed fairly representative and sufficient.

In further analysis of the occupations of Negroes these selected industries were divided first into their most natural classification, i.e., those employing Negroes and those not employing them. The plants included in the Survey divided thus are as follows:

	NO.	WHITE		NEGRO		TOTAL
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Plants Employing Negroes	113	21217	2539	5809	716	30281
Plants Not Employing Negroes	62	18233	2502			20735
TOTAL	175	39450	5041	5809	716	51016

The establishments represent a wide diversity of product and demand a range of technique equally wide. There were plants employing Negroes for certain grades of work and others refusing to employ them on the similar processes for reasons adequate and sufficient to each respectively. Some of the plants have what they call "labor policies" which summarily exclude all Negroes as below the standard for workers; other with the identical processes regard them as best fitted for their work. No standard appears to be observed; no objective basis for selecting a labor supply seems to exist. Generally speaking the following factors are important in influencing the use of Negroes:

1. Tradition, or the fixed custom of using Negroes in certain portions because they are supposed to be by nature better equipped for it; or because they are popularly regarded as "Negro jobs."
2. The unavailability of white labor.
3. The relatively cheaper cost of Negro labor.
4. The nature of the work which because of its general disagreeableness attracts only the worst class of white labor, and those only temporarily.
5. The nature of the industry making necessary a large proportion of unskilled labor capable of sustained physical exertion.
6. The seasonal character of the industry requiring a ready, fluid labor supply available in need.

Throughout the city the plants that employ Negroes, with a very few exceptions, may readily be pointed out by holding in mind one or more of the considerations listed above. The Baltimore industries, it will be recalled, are highly diversified. This fact militates strongly against any uniformity in proportions of persons, especially Negroes, employed. Again, its industries in many instances are developed and frequently controlled by outsiders who seek this locality for certain outstanding advantages. This fact further militates against uniformity of policy. Each of the principal types of industries in which Negroes are employed therefore, are briefly and separately treated.

#### Industries Employing Negroes Principally

Of these industries the most important group is composed of these predominantly Negro. These include the fertilizer industry, which is the largest in the country, the docks, construction labor, tanning, and brick making.

### The Fertilizer Industry

The outstanding features of the fertilizer industry are as follows:

1. It is seasonal and thus must depend upon a large drifting labor supply.
2. It is disagreeable work because of its strong, offensive odors and dust.
3. Most of the manufacturing processes call for unskilled labor.

The preponderance of labor in all of the plants is Negro. Eight fertilizer plants and one chemical plant were visited. In the eight plants there were employed 367 whites and 1108 Negroes. With few exceptions all the processes except that of supervision are done by Negroes. The work is easy to learn, but requires considerable physical strength. On these jobs they are preferred to white men.

### Seasonal Character of the Fertilizer Industry

The heaviest demand for fertilizers comes around the Spring of the year. Accordingly, from February 1st to June 1st, and from July 15th to October 15th, the working force is at its height. At other times the number is reduced to about 25 per cent of all full strength. The men kept are the older employees, some of whom have been with the establishments from ten to twenty-five years. The "rush season" workers, knowing the instability of the industry and the disagreeable features of the work, are usually men who have accepted the work as a last resort, intending to leave it at the first opportunity. The labor turnover thus is extremely high. Significantly the turnover rates fluctuate according to wages paid and conditions of employment. The highest turnover rate appeared in plants paying 25 cents an hour for all branches of common labor and the lowest in the plant paying 30 cents an hour for the same work. This scale of wages, is somewhat less than the rate paid for work less onerous, less disagreeable and less inconvenient.

### The Longshoremén

The second group, the longshoremén, have a most interesting history in the city. Before the Civil War practically all the longshoremén were Negroes. With the entrance of many white laborers into this field immediately following the war there was serious competition which at first threatened to drive out Negroes entirely. At one time this competition was marked by strikes and boycotts. An outstanding example of this period was the strike of white workers because the dock superintendent persisted in employing Negroes. Temporarily the Negroes were ousted and in a desperate effort to insure regular employment bought a shipyard and marine railway with the hard earned money of these ousted longshoremén and other Negroes and went to work. They were duped in this, for whereas they supposed they were buying the property in fee, a cleverly inserted clause specified that it was merely being leased for 20 years. At the end of the 20 years most of which time was required to pay for it, the shipyard was taken away.

However, the very natural adaptability of Negroes to this work soon brought up their numbers again at first to an equal proportion with the whites and later to a majority which they have since held. At present there are 4,290 men employed in the city as longshoremén and stevedores, of which number 3,151 or 73 per cent, are Negroes. Employers agree that, considered as a group, they are superior to any other class of workers available for the type of labor. They have the physical strength, agility and dexterity of the larger muscles necessary for the work, and familiarity with longshoremén work acquired over a long period of employment in this field.

Their ready adaptability and selection for this kind of work, however, suggests an outstanding feature of their general industrial status. Dock work is extremely irregular and uncertain. It demands a large body of casual labor and casual employment is for the ordinary work demoralizing. The work depends upon the arrival and departure of ships. In the case of very heavy cargo ships this is determined first by the season.

Even in normal shipping times there is a considerable element of uncertainty. First may come a long period of idleness, then an exhausting

stretch of continuous exertion. Irregularity and uncertainty of work mean irregularity and uncertainty of income and consequent ill-organization of family life. The excessively large per cent of Negro women employed is a reflection of this abnormality. Thrift is impossible. Further, the excessively long continuous hours of feverish work when it is available and the enforced idleness which inevitably follows result in chronic ailments and aid in bringing about early disabilities. The average of the most regular workers is three days a week for the year around.

#### Brick-yard Laborers

Third in this group are the brick-yard laborers. The Census reports but 369 persons engaged in this work in 1920 of which number 265 were Negroes. The intensive survey located 450 brick-yard laborers, 75 per cent of whom were Negroes.

Fourth in the list are construction laborers. This includes street paving, excavation, and general building contract work. Practically all of this work is unskilled. There are 2,204 such laborers in the city, of which number 1,412 or over 50 per cent are Negroes.

The fifth is tanning. There is but one tannery in the city, but over 90 per cent of its employees are Negroes.

Of the 5 types of industries these factors are common:

1. The work is seasonal and requires a large, mobile labor supply.
2. Over 90 per cent of the processes are unskilled.
3. The basic wage paid for unskilled work was 25 cents per hour.
4. Opportunities for advancement are limited first by the predominantly unskilled character of the work, second by the racial division which with but few exceptions, decrees that the skilled work and supervisory positions including that of foreman, shall be performed by white workers.
5. The labor turnover is high.
6. The work generally demands a cheap class of labor and is not attractive to white laborers.

Of these plants all found Negro labor satisfactory for the work on which they were engaged, and in most instances preferred them to white laborers, since as between the two races the chances for good workers were greater among the Negroes whom they were able to employ.

#### Industrial Employing Negroes for Special Processes

The next group of industries are those employing Negroes on special processes. The proportions of Negroes used depend in large measure on the nature of work to be done, and the proportions increased usually with the amount of unskilled work connected with the industry. Included in this group are the metal industries, food products industries, clothing, glass manufacture, coal and wood, and light manufacturing.

In the metal industries Negroes have the highest percentage of semi-skilled workers, averaging about 10 per cent of the semi-skilled workers. Most of these are at Sparrows Point. Included in the intensive study were 12 plants with a total of 16,416 workers of whom 3,194 or 20 per cent were Negroes. Although there are both white and Negro skilled and semi-skilled workers in these plants, there is frequently a racial division of jobs. For example, in one of the shipbuilding plants it is understood that Negroes should do the ground riveting, while white workers did the riveting on the ship's hull.

Of the Negro workers employed in the metal trades, 2,715 are unskilled and 588 are skilled or semi-skilled. Fortunately for them, the opportunities provided in this work in Baltimore as well as other parts, particularly Newport News, Virginia, have made possible the acquirement of a considerable degree of skill and experience. It will be recalled that the world's record for speed and accuracy in riveting was won by Charles Knight, a Negro employed in a Baltimore plant. Mr. Allison Muir confirmed the view generally held that Negro workers were well adapted to hard metal work; "in steel and shipbuilding," he said, "they make out exceptionally well."

That good workers were found in these trades is frequently explained as

the result of the "exclusion policy" of certain of the unions which have succeeded in pushing Negroes out of "practically everything but construction and stevedore work." Those with any aptitude in skilled work thus find themselves in these trades, the only ones in which their capacity for skill may find an outlet.

#### Types of Work for Which Negroes Are Employed

In the steel mills and shipbuilding plants where they are employed, their range of work is wider, perhaps, than in any other forms of employment in the city. Proportionately, there are more skilled Negroes employed than in any other line of work. Aside from furnishing from 15 to 20 per cent of the general labor supply and approximately 40 per cent of the unskilled labor, they are semi-skilled workers in fairly large numbers, riggers, crane operators, riveters, reamers and drillers. In one plant a Negro is foreman of the erectors, a highly responsible position. They also perform semi-skilled and skilled work connected with the coke and blast furnaces, coke ovens and open hearths.

In the principal food industries of the city there are employed 4,322 workers of whom 575 or about 13 per cent are Negroes. Included in the more intensive inquiry were 18 establishments employing a total of 3,529, of whom 543 were Negroes. These establishments included bakeries, wholesale packing houses, canning, preserving, meat packing plants and candy manufacturers. The duties of the Negroes employed fall generally into three classes: (1) ordinary cleaners, (2) laborers and (3) workers engaged in manufacturing processes. The distribution of these workers among these classes of work, however, discloses an interesting situation. Strictly speaking, though classed as workers in the food products industries, only a small proportion are actually doing work that could not as well be performed in any industry. The distribution is as follows:

Unskilled Labor	334
Semi-Skilled	130
Skilled	11
Porters, Cleaners and Scrub Women	78
	<hr/>
	543

The work classed as unskilled labor is variously described by the employers as "bull labor," "heavy work," "dirty work." In these plants it means that they load and unload, truck, handle hides, do the construction work about the plant, pack goods, shuck oysters, and perform other duties requiring purely manual labor. The 130 semi-skilled and 11 skilled workers are those engaged in the manufacturing processes proper and constitute about 26 per cent of the Negroes employed. Their operations consist of peeling and cutting fruits, operating machines, smoking meat and serving as helpers to white butchers. Of the skilled Negro workers one is a machinist's helper and ten are skilled process workers in the meat packing industry.

In the clothing industry Negroes are used to manufacture cheap shirts and overalls, as pressers, stitchers and power machine operators. In the manufacture of suits, hats, shoes and fine ladies' wear they are excluded entirely. There is a racial division of jobs with fixed wages, which, though operating without discrimination in actual wages paid for certain work, in effect yields a difference of from 2 to 4 dollars weekly more for white workers on piece work which Negroes are not permitted to do.

There are 13,792 persons engaged in this industry of which number 1,371 are Negroes and most of these Negroes women.

In the manufacture of glass 850 employes were listed, of whom 220 were Negroes. The employers have definite reasons for their use of Negroes and have found them suitable for the positions in which they are employed. In the two principal plants Negroes are used as mold shutters and carriers. The peculiar "adaptability" of Negroes for this type of the work was explained by the manager of one of the plants as follows:

"We found that Negroes were best adapted to the work of carrying and mold shutting, because there is no incentive on the job, nothing to look forward to, and the white boys won't stay on it. The Negroes learn quickly and stay."

In the other plant it was explained that they were found satisfactory for all processes excepting the skilled work and because this was a closed shop,

certain kinds of work could not be done by non-union men and Negroes could not be union men.

In other groups of industries not included in this summary, Negroes are employed in small numbers on the manufacturing processes, but almost exclusively as porters, janitors and cleaners.

#### Industries Not Employing Negroes

The survey, it will be recalled, did not propose to cover all of the industries of Baltimore because of their very wide diversity. Emphasis was placed upon those industries where it was probable that Negroes were employed in some capacity or where the industry was an important one in the structure of the city's business life, whether it employed Negroes or not. All of the larger ones, therefore, were covered, but many of the smaller ones omitted. In the 175 plants included in this study, 62 employing a total of 20,735 persons did not employ Negroes. The exclusion of Negroes was prompted by a diversity of causes as wide indeed as the variety in the types of these industries. Where the processes require many skilled and semi-skilled workers and only a small proportion of common labor, Negroes are most frequently excluded even from the common labor. This is done to avoid "mixing their workers." There were other plants of the same industrial type which employed an occasional Negro for some form of personal service, but in the main these also may be regarded as closed industries for Negroes. This latter group includes the oil refineries of the city and the chemical establishments not engaged in the manufacture of fertilizers.

There is another type of plant excluding Negroes whose manufacturing processes are identical with those of plants that do employ them. The exclusion of Negro workers is practiced with no reference to the ability of Negroes for performing the work.

With few exceptions, therefore, it appears that those establishments barring Negroes are no different in kind from those which employed them. The reasons, therefore, for their actions must be found in other circumstances.

They are excluded from several of the iron and steel industries because of the policy of *plants* inherited usually from a former management; from practically all of the light manufacturing plants which employ large numbers of white women; from plants manufacturing food products such as macaroni, flour, cakes and crackers, and from some of the meat packers; from practically all of the oil refineries; from all of the electrical manufacturing companies; from plants manufacturing rubber tires; from all plants manufacturing men's and women's suits, straw hats and shoes, because these require apprenticeship; and from many of the plants manufacturing light clothing. There are other miscellaneous industries represented by one or two establishments which do not employ them, and to the list given above are added the independent skilled trades, such as carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing and steam-fitting, plastering, horse-shoeing, operating motion picture machines, stationary and portable engineering. The exclusion in the independent trades from general work opportunities is largely due to the restrictive policies of the unions. The exclusion, however, is not absolute, for occasionally there are to be found Negro carpenters and bricklayers who work for other Negroes, or who establish themselves as independent contractors, and there are a few independent builders who in desperation over what they regard as the autocratic demands of the unions, defy their wrath and place Negroes on jobs. The number of such builders, however, as yet is small. On the other hand, for barbers, motion picture operators, horse-shoers, public accountants, stationary and portable engineers, there are State Examining Boards which exercise a very rigid selection and by this means have been known to hold down the number of Negroes' licenses.

#### Why Negroes Are Excluded

There seems to be little consistency in the reasons given for the exclusion of Negroes. They are excluded from the same types of industries for widely different reasons and from one concern for the same reason that they are employed in another. Some plants are restrained from employing them through fear of difficulties resulting from "mixing the races," although no unfavorable experience is registered by other plants that have been employing

them for as long as forty years; some bar them because of a variety of beliefs concerning the ability of Negroes, which in most cases has not been tested. These beliefs are frequently inconsistent with themselves. For example, there are several plants that continued Negroes in their employment largely because of their loyalty, while others do not employ them because of their suspected lack of loyalty; some bar them on the belief that they never acquire the skill necessary, even though the Negroes are known to be doing precisely the same thing in other industries of the same type.

The causes of the exclusion of Negroes may be listed as follows:

1. Traditional policy of the plant not to employ Negroes.
2. Fear of racial difficulties if whites and Negroes are introduced into the same plant.
3. Fear of the objection of white workers and resultant labor difficulties.
4. Traditional beliefs about the Negro which concern their mentality and character, and general inability to perform the work required.
5. Fear of bringing Negroes into contact with white women workers.
6. Lack of training of Negroes for certain jobs.
7. Unsatisfactory experience with Negro workers in the past.
8. Advocacy of certain jobs as belonging exclusively to the white race.
9. Expense that would be involved in making alterations in the building to accommodate white and Negro workers separately.
10. Objection of labor unions.

#### Labor Unions and the Negro

The history of the Negro laborer and the Trade Union Movement is but another aspect of his struggle for status in the industries of Baltimore. Essentially he is a buffer between the employers and the unions. This is an unfortunate position, for there is no security in either stronghold. His relation to his job takes on the nature of a vicious circle. In the unionized crafts he may not work unless he belongs to a union, and the most frequent, specious argument advanced by the unions is that he cannot become a member unless he is already employed. The result is frequently that he neither gets a job nor joins a union. The labor union movement, although recognizing the necessity for removing the menace of strikebreakers through unionization, with most astonishing inconsistency (a few instances excepted) deliberately opposes the organization of Negroes as a menace to the trade.

On the other hand, employers recognize in Negroes a most powerful weapon of opposition to the excessive demands of the unions. The impending shadow of Negroes as strike-breakers has staved off many strikes and lost for the strikers many others. As a further complication of an already bad situation, the most common procedure of the employers is to dismiss their Negro workers as soon as their purposes have been served. Bitterness of feeling between the white and Negro workers as a result of these tactics is inevitable.

The situation at present is one that admits little light. Employers may with generous grace pass the responsibility for exclusion to the unions, while the unions with equal grace pass it back to employers. However, it is a fact that in the "open" shops there is an almost complete exclusion of Negroes from the skilled positions and many of the semi-skilled ones for which the unions are in no sense responsible; and in practically all of the independent crafts, such as carpentry, brick masonry, plumbing and steam-fitting, there is an almost total exclusion for which the employers are not responsible. For in the former case union organizations are not tolerated, and in the latter employers willing to use Negroes have been definitely prohibited by the unions.

The Baltimore Federation of Labor lists 114 locals in the city affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. This list divides itself into three parts: (a) those crafts in which Negroes are not employed; (b) those crafts in which Negroes are employed but are not admitted into the unions, and (c) those lines of work in which Negroes are employed and are permitted to organize separate locals.

Fifty-four unions fall into this first group. The second is made up largely of independent crafts unions--carpentry, brick masonry, plumbing and steam-fitting, painting and decorating, paper-hanging and mechanics--all of which exclude Negroes from membership.

In the third group are locals in which Negroes have membership but are organized without exception in separate locals. They are as follows:

Unions	Membership
The Longshoremen	800
International Hod Carriers and Common Laborers No. 664	250
Station Employees Association (Under the jurisdiction of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks)	150
Musicians Association	60
Freight Handlers No. 17393	700
Federal Employees	20
Total	1980

These are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

There are other independent labor organizations as follows:

The Consolidated Hod Carriers No. 1;  
 The International Building Laborers Protective Association No. 3;  
 The National Hod Carriers and Common Laborers No. 124;  
 The Railway Men's Benevolent and Protective Association.

The independent labor organizations, although figures on membership were not available, have a combined membership estimated at 1900. This totals about 3880.

The range of wages for Negroes at the time of the survey during March, April and May of 1922, averaged \$14.50 per week for fifty-eight hours in the fertilizer works. Overtime, however, was permitted, and as much as \$17.50 per week can be earned in this manner. A much higher range of pay is obtained in the metal trades. Although this rate varied widely between plants, the most common rate for unskilled work was twenty-five cents an hour; thirty-four cents an hour for semi-skilled, and from fifty to sixty-five cents an hour for skilled work. Although there was observed no important instances of discriminatory rates for whites and Negroes working on the same jobs and performing the same processes, it rarely occurs that the two races are mixed, and over 75% of all the Negroes working were confined to the branches of work yielding the lowest pay.

Despite the comparatively low range of income, the Negro population pays relatively the highest rents of any group in the city. Over 100% more Negro women are forced to work away from home than native white of mixed parentage or foreign born whites.

The experiences of employers of Negro labor indicate that in a majority of instances, satisfactory results have been obtained. There is, however, a disposition to avoid breaking with the tradition of using Negroes only for certain grades of work. The Negro population on the other hand, while chafing under these restrictions, is immersed in the community's policy of conservatism and their protests weak and scattered, as a result, have little effect.

*Opportunity*, 1 (June, 1923): 12-19.

## 11. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Office of the Secretary  
 Washington

September 20, 1924

### *Negro Workers on Steam Railway Lines of the United States*

Figures showing the number and classification of Negro employees of steam railway lines, as summarized by this office, conclusively show the entrance,



advancement, and permanency of employment of Negro workers in one of the most important industries of the country. In all, there are 136,065 Negro rail hands who are directly engaged in handling or safeguarding the transportation of persons or property over the lines of the various steam railway carriers of the United States.

Negro railway employees are usually thought of as porters, and the 136,065 total contains train and Pullman porters in the number of 20,224, of whom twenty-three are colored women. The other classified railway occupations, however, show that rail transportation workers of the Negro race are in no wise confined to providing traveling comforts and performing domestic service for passengers. In fact, the summary shows that there are two Negro officials and superintendents of rail lines, located in Ohio and Florida. Ninety-seven Negro telegraphers, well distributed over the country, are actually engaged in safeguarding passengers and property. There are 111 engineers and 6,478 firemen, 202 inspectors of way and structures, 202 telegraph and telephone linemen, 33 conductors, 111 baggagemen and freight agents, 2,874 switchmen and flagmen, 1,195 foremen and overseers, 2,377 boiler washers and engine hostlers, 4,485 brakemen, 95,713 laborers, and 1,961 workers employed at miscellaneous occupations, such as ticket agents and station hands, who are not classified in official listings. The total includes an appreciable number of female employees who work as porters, laborers, telegraph operators, etc. The New York State rail lines, in fact, boast of four female Negro telegraphers. Illinois, with the veteran J. H. Kelley, who for more than forty years has been a telegrapher for the Illinois Central Railroad Company, takes first place in the period of employment service.

Geographically, these 136,065 Negro rail hands are well distributed throughout every State in the Union. Georgia leads with 10,865 and is followed by Louisiana with 9,141; Virginia, 9,010; Alabama, 8,844; Texas, 8,381; Tennessee, 8,100; Mississippi, 7,744; North Carolina, 5,321; Florida, 5,091; Illinois, 4,544; Arkansas, 4,184; Kentucky, 3,916; South Carolina, 3,858; Missouri, 3,706; Pennsylvania, 3,569; Ohio, 3,219; Maryland, 2,221; West Virginia, 2,052; Oklahoma, 1,807; Indiana, 1,167; New York, 1,127. Each of the remaining States has less than 1,000 Negro rail workers, New Hampshire, with its one brakeman, two laborers and one switchman, completing the list.

The summary plainly shows that avenues of employment in the transportation industry are rapidly being opened to the colored worker and that his future in this phase of employment has a particularly bright aspect.

*The Messenger*, 6 (October, 1924): 314.

## 12. INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT OF THE NEGRO IN PENNSYLVANIA

Two studies of the industrial employment of the negro in Pennsylvania have recently appeared, one made by the Department of Labor and Industry of Pennsylvania, and the other by the executive secretary of the Pittsburgh Urban League. The results of the first are given in the January issue of the department's official publication, *Labor and Industry*. Questionnaires relating to the period from January 1, 1923, to September 1, 1925, were sent to 1,478 employers, including manufacturers, railroad companies, coal-mining companies, and general construction companies or contractors. Hotels, restaurants, dining cars, and other places in which colored workers are customarily and frequently employed were omitted. Replies were received from 1,075 employers, of whom 559 reported that they did not employ negroes, 55 had formerly employed them but did not do so during the period covered, and 461 were employing them in numbers varying from 5 or fewer in the case of 157 employers to 50 and over in the case of 97. The general reason assigned for not employing them was that they were scarce in the employer's particular neighborhood or not to be found there at all. "In only a few instances, so few as to be practically negligible, does there appear to be any racial prejudice or antagonism." Colored women were practically not found in these industrial employments, but the number of colored men was large. "During this period the railroads report a gross employment of over 1,700; the coal-mining

companies, a gross employment of over 3,400; contractors, a gross employment of over 5,400; and general industries, a gross employment of nearly 24,000."

In general the employers stated that the greatest increase in the employment of colored workers had occurred in 1923, being caused by a period of business prosperity coupled with a shortage of white labor, either native or foreign. In 1924 there was a marked falling off, due to industrial depression. In building construction the variations in the employment of colored labor were seasonal, the lowest point being reached in the winter of 1925. The employment of colored labor followed closely the movement of other employment.

Questions as to the dependability and adaptability of colored workers brought varying replies, ranging from the statement that "they require constant supervision to keep them active," to "their dependability compares favorably with that of other groups." No tabulation is given of opinions on this point, but replies quoted, which are said to be typical, give rather a favorable impression of both the dependability and the adaptability of the group. Questions as to their health and their aptitude brought much the same kind of answers. Employers for the most part thought either that there was no noticeable difference between the colored and other workers or that the balance inclined slightly in favor of the colored.

To a question as to how colored workers are secured, the replies, in order of frequency, are as follows:

One, at the gate; 2, through our own employment office; 3, through employees who inform their friends and acquaintances of openings; 4 through advertising; 5, through State employment offices; 6, through private employment agencies; 7, through foremen.

A number of large employers report that in emergencies they import negro labor from the Southern States. Many contractors and construction companies state that they secure their negro help through commissary managers, private employment agencies, and gang bosses.

The general results of the inquiry are thus summed up:

The composite impression from a comprehensive examination of all the replies to the questionnaire concerning negro employment in Pennsylvania may fairly be summarized as follows:

1. General ignorance of negroes as workmen by those employers who have never used them.
2. No serious or extreme racial prejudice against negro workmen.
3. General willingness by employers to employ negroes upon their merits and upon a competitive basis with white men doing the same kind of work.
4. Increasing demand for negro workmen for construction work, especially for foundation, concrete, and excavation work where they may eventually become indispensable.
5. The tendency of negro employment to follow closely the trend of general employment curves.
6. Restriction of foreign immigration widens the demand and opportunity for negro workers.
7. The general good health of negro workmen.
8. The low liability to accident of negro workmen.

#### Employment of Negroes in the Steel Industry of Pennsylvania

The second study referred to appears in the March, 1926, issue of Opportunity, the journal of the National Urban League. This survey, made by John T. Clark, deals with the employment of negroes in the steel industry in the vicinity of Pittsburgh, and covers approximately the same period as the more general inquiry made by the department of labor and industry. Negroes have entered this field in large numbers. The ease with which they made their entry here is attributed by the writer to two facts: The cutting off of the almost unlimited stream of immigrants upon which the industry had depended for certain types of workers, and the open-shop character of the steel industry, which had prevented the development of established customs or conventions interfering with the employment of workers of any race, creed, or color.

As in the wider study, so also in the steel industry, it was found that the highest point of negro employment occurred in 1923, that there was a

falling off in 1924, and a gradual increase in 1925, this movement being due to the general industrial situation rather than to local causes. In 1923 it was reported that 23 steel mills in the Pittsburgh district employed 16,000 colored workers--21 per cent of their entire working force. A period of industrial depression set in at the close of 1923, and by December, 1924, the mills had reduced their output to from 30 to 60 per cent of their normal capacity. At this time a check-up was made to see how the colored workers were faring in the general reduction of forces, and rather unexpectedly it was found that they had been retained more generally than the white workers.

The terse reply of one employer that "we are responsible for output, not color," sums up the general attitude of employers throughout the mills in this district during this period, while depleting their labor forces. In one plant, the A. M. Byers Co., the entire force of negroes was retained, although the plant's output was reduced to 60 per cent by letting out white workmen. The assistant superintendent stated that "they had retained the men upon whom they could rely the most." In the Clark Mills of the Carnegie Steel Co., the percentage of negroes during peak times in 1923 was 42 per cent and at the lowest point in 1924 they were 50 per cent of the total working force.

It is suggested that several causes besides the quality of their work may have contributed to this greater retention of colored workers. It is easier for white men to find other work, and so when the mills began working short time, they would be more likely than colored employees to leave in order to get jobs elsewhere. Again, numbers of the colored workers are single men living in boarding houses and bunks, and these, if laid off, would be likely to leave the district. Therefore to lay them off would mean losing them completely, and when business improved the managers would have the expensive task of building up their colored force again from outside districts. And again, "there are evidences that employers have felt some responsibility toward these newcomers who have not quite had a sufficient opportunity to entrench themselves in the communities."

In December, 1925, after the industrial revival had begun, another check-up showed 9 of the largest mills in the district "averaging 82 per cent output and employing 22 per cent negroes of their total working force of 29,560 men."

It appears that in the larger mills which employ and retain men more on a basis of the workman's actual efficiency than the smaller mills, more negroes in proportion are found at work, which leads us to believe that negro steel workers have "made good," notwithstanding any reports to the contrary.

Another reason for reaching the same conclusion is found in the gradual increase in the number of colored workers in minor supervisory positions.

In 1923 the largest number of straw-bosses found in any mill was 35. We found in December, 1925, in one mill employing 1,500 negroes, 53 straw-bosses. These men are gang foremen, who determine the personnel of their gangs. These negro leaders of gangs composed largely of negroes eliminate some of the causes for such heavy negro labor turnovers, which has been the greatest complaint against negro. . . . Foremen naturally are appearing out from the ranks of straw-bosses. In 7 out of the 9 mills investigated, from 2 to 10 negro foremen each were found in complete control of certain processes.

There are admittedly difficulties about the coming in of colored workers. Landlords and business men are inclined to raise prices when they appear, and as these increases are carried over to the whole community the workers already on the spot object to the influx of newcomers. Housing is a serious difficulty. The sections in which negroes may find homes are unsightly and very far from satisfying to the colored workers. "In a steel town of 19,000 inhabitants, employing about 1,400 negroes, only three negroes have bought property during the last 5 years." The steel companies have talked of building homes for the colored workers, but practically none have done anything for the last seven years, and housing conditions grow worse instead of better. On the other hand, the Ku Klux Klan movement seems in these communities to have died down, and it is to the interest of the mill concerns who find the colored workers practically indispensable to see that no such movement becomes effective. The general conclusion reached is that the negro is in the steel

industry to stay and that conditions in the mill communities are being gradually adjusted to his presence.

*Monthly Labor Review*, 22(June, 1926): 48-51.

### 13. NEGRO LABOR AND PUBLIC UTILITIES, I

By George S. Schuyler<sup>7</sup>

*How the Negro worker, who as consumer, pays huge sums yearly for street car-fare, telephone, telegrams, gas and electric service and expressage, is jimmied into menial positions by these public utilities.*

#### How the System Works in "Liberal" New York

There are almost a quarter million Negroes in the city of Greater New York. All of them use the various transit utilities, most of them daily. A vast number of them also use the telephone daily, either in their homes or in booths. They also liberally patronize the telegraph offices of both companies while all of them are consumers of gas and electric power and light, to say nothing of the Services of the American Express Company.

These public utilities enjoy a monopoly. One must use their service or do without, yet, although a considerable percentage of their revenue is derived from Negroes, the Negro worker, male and female, seeking employment with them is subjected to the familiar jim-crow methods: i.e., generally given only menial employment, if any, regardless of his or her capacity to hold other positions.

In order to ascertain to what extent the Negro worker is subjected to industrial discrimination. The MESSENGER has inquired of these companies the extent to which they employ Negroes. The results are printed below.

#### *New York Telephone Company*

T. P. Sylvan, vice-president of this monopolistic public utility, replied as follows:

"As to the question of employment by this Company of persons of known Negro descent, we might say that we do employ such persons, having some on our payrolls at the present time assisting us in the conduct of our restaurant and lounge facilities."

In other words, the only work Negroes can get with this huge public utility is employment as lackeys and menials. Being curious to ascertain what sort of excuse the New York Telephone Company would give for this discrimination, we wrote again asking why no operators of known Negro descent were employed. The answer we received appears below.

Dear Sir:

Answering your inquiry of the 15th; this Company has repeatedly met with very fine and distinguished members of your race who have raised the question that you propound, and we have taken the pains to show them through our operations and, I believe, in the main, satisfied them that the position which we have taken with reference to their employment has been a proper and necessary one. I am sure that if you will take the time to make inquiry or look into the matter yourself, you will come to the same conclusion that we have and I trust may arrive at the place where you will feel any considerable attention given by you in the way of agitation or publication will result in still further increasing any heartburning or disappointment now extant.

Very truly yours,  
T. P. SYLVAN,  
Vice-President

It is interesting to note that while Negroes may work in the same room with whites, they can only be employed in the lounges and restaurants. Lastly, what kind of Negroes were those Mr. Sylvan mentions in his first sentence?

*Consolidated Gas Company*

This is one of the most powerful public utilities in New York City, and has among its directors such well-known magnates as George F. Baker, B. Cortelyou, John D. Ryan and Percy A. Rockefeller. To THE MESSENGER'S letter of inquiry, Mr. H. M. Bundage, vice-president, replied in part, as follows:

"We employ Negroes and have done so for many years. At the present time we have 72 in our employ (68 male and 4 female) many of whom have rendered long years of faithful service. Our oldest Negro employee has thirty-nine years to his credit."

Upon our further inquiry as to the positions in which Negroes were allowed to "render long years of faithful service," Mr. Bundage kindly informed us:

"Replying to your favor of November 23rd, have to advise that Negroes employed by us render 'common labor, maid service, janitorial service and the like.' We do not assign Negroes as stenographers, clerks or inspectors."

*Standard Gas Light Company*

This powerful public utility also has its board of directors honored by the presence of Messrs. Cortelyou and Rockefeller. W. Greely Hoyt, the president, promptly replied:

"Answering your second question, our employees in this respect (referring to Negroes) cover laborers, coal handlers and porters."

So the dear reader can readily conclude what chance the Negro boy or girl seeking a bright future will have at the Standard Gas Light Company.

*Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Corporation*

This is the firm that operates surface cars, elevated trains and subways in the Borough of Kings, and a subway connecting Manhattan and thence to the Borough of Queens. No employees of ascertainable Negro descent have ever been observed doing any, work other than common labor, elevator operation, janitor and porter service. It is possible but not probable that the company employs Negro car washers.

However, Mr. W. S. Menden, the president of this huge corporation, writes us:

"The companies of B. M. T. System employ some Negroes in practically all of their departments. The porter service of the Transportation Department of rapid transit lines consists of practically all Negroes."

The nickels of Negro citizens are welcome, of course, but when it comes to getting a job as conductor, motorman, ticket agent, train dispatcher or in any of the jobs that are worth-while, there is "nothing doing."

Mr. Menden, the president, confirmed this in a subsequent letter in which he blandly replies:

"Our companies employ comparatively few Negroes in our general office, and we employ none as motormen or conductors."

*The Interborough Rapid Transit Company*

"The World's Safest Railroad," as it calls itself, can point, doubtless with pride, to its three or four great subways and three or four elevated systems connecting the boroughs of Manhattan, The Bronx, Queens and Kings. It is the Grand Old Man of public utilities. Its exploited workers, sick of the Company Union, recently went on strike, but the Company, by the usual well-known method, won out. Things are now pursuing the even tenor of their way. The underpaid white workers fill the more desirable positions while all the base of the industrial triangle are the Negro porters and laborers. A Negro has about as much chance of getting a job as motorman, conductor, ticket agent,

money changer, stenographer, train dispatcher, guard or such positions as an icicle has in the crater of Vesuvius.

"The World's Safest Railroad" did not answer our letter. Probably they didn't get it, despite the acknowledged efficiency of the New York Post Office, which, by the way, employs hundreds of Negroes as clerks, carriers and even superintendent.

#### *The Street Railways*

A Negro can about as easily get a job as conductor or motorman on one of the numerous street railways in New York City as a mosquito can live in a blast furnace. To the query of THE MESSENGER the New York Railways Corporation through its secretary, J. B. Gordon, replied that:

"We have a few Negroes in our employ, who are used mostly in the capacity of messengers."

Later on, in answer to further inquiry, Mr. Gordon answered:

"In reply to your letter of November 23rd, I give the various classifications in which Negroes are employed by us, and the number in each class."

"1 Controllerman, 3 Machinists, 2 Machinist's Helpers, 3 Chauffeurs, 1 Storetender, 1 Blacksmith's Helper, 1 Messenger (office)."

While there seems a contradiction between the statement in the first reply and that in the second, it is encouraging to note the various positions open to Negroes in this company. Of course there is doubtless little hope there for the Negro stenographer, bookkeeper or accountant.

We heard also from Mr. Garrow T. Geer, secretary of the Third Avenue Railway system, a corporation controlling several street railways. Mr. Geer admitted that the companies of the system employed Negroes but--as the song goes "He didn't say how; he didn't say where." To our further inquiry, however, Mr. Geer sent the following illuminating reply:

"I am advised by our Employment Department that we have a number of Negro porters; none among our office employees and none on the cars."

#### *The New York Edison Company*

If you use electricity in New York City, its dollars to doughnuts that you buy it from the New York Edison Company, whose board of directors include such well-known capitalists as George T. Baker, George B. Cortelyou and Percy A. Rockefeller. Negroes buy it also in large quantities.

To our query, Mr. Frederick Smith, the treasurer, cautiously replied:

"It is the Company's policy to employ those applicants best fitter for the general and individual requirements of positions available, without regard to race, creed, color or politics."

This was, however, no answer to our query as to what positions Negroes occupied. One can best judge a company's policy by what it *does* rather than by what it *says*. Consequently we again inquired relative to the positions held by, or available to, citizens of Negro descent, to which one Mr. J. P. Jackson replied:

"You will have as complete a reply as I believe we can give if you will refer to the last paragraph of Mr. Smith's letter to you, dated October 26th. . . ."

"We have colored people in a variety of positions in this Company as our selection of new employees is based strictly on their capacity for holding the positions to be filled."

Still we do not know *what* positions Negro citizens hold with huge public utility. It is certain that we have never seen a Negro as clerk in one of their offices, as inspector of meters or as a worker outside.

#### *American Railway Express Company*

Our people move to and fro. Every time they move a trunk, this almost monopolistic express company handles it. Well, what chance has the Negro worker for employment with this Company?

Mr. Robert E. M. Cowie, president of the American Railway Express Company, replied that:

"This Company employs throughout the United States and especially in the South a very large number of Negroes. Their employment is in a great variety and number of positions having to do with the handling of our express matter."

From the New York City office, however, we learn that:

"In New York City Negroes are employed as elevator operators, cleaners, janitors and doormen. Majority of employees is (sic) Irish."

"In the Southland, Negroes are employed as drivers, porters, clerks as well as other positions similar to those in New York City."

We have visited hundreds of cities and towns in the Southland and have observed clerks of Negro descent at but two of the company's offices, and they were in all-Negro towns, but then the company knows best.

Needless to say, the two telegraph companies are "white only" as concerns employment.

We believe our readers have gathered from the foregoing survey just how the Negro workers stand with the public utilities doing business in the world's greatest city.

In subsequent numbers we shall publish the results of our inquiries on this subject in other large centers of Negro population.

*The Messenger*, 9 (January, 1927): 4, 9.

#### 14. NEGRO LABOR AND PUBLIC UTILITIES, II

By George S. Schuyler

*Well, folks, here we are again. Last month you saw what kind of a break the dark brother is given by some of the big public utilities in the real capitol of the United States: New York City. Now, brethren, let us wander around the country and see what we can pick up on our three-tube set, or what have you?*

##### THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY, INC.

Doubtless our readers will recall how many telegrams they sent last year when they get the reports from the following stations:

Columbus, Ohio  
(25,000 Negroes)

Mr. E. W. Grob, the City Superintendent, broadcasts as follows: "We employ one Negro as a stock clerk, and others as janitors at this office."

Kansas City, Mo.  
(31,000 Negroes)

The W. U. folks send us this soothing bedtime story: "We do not employ Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature. The only Negroes we employ are janitors and maids."

Chattanooga, Tenn.  
(18,000 Negroes)

From that dear old Dixie, Mr. W. B. Long, the manager of the local W. U., announces: "We have only two Negro employees at this office. Neither of them are employed in a clerical capacity. They are both janitors. If Negroes are employed by this company in any other capacity except messengers and janitors I am not aware of the fact." So that's that. Well, close in, children, and hear the good news from

Pittsburgh, Pa.  
(38,000 Negroes)

The message of the City Superintendent of the W. U. is short and snappy, i.e.: "We have four colored employees in our service in the capacity of janitors." This despite the fact that the burg is known as "The Smoky City." . . . Well, let's not get discouraged until we hear from

Augusta, Ga.  
(23,000 Negroes)

A similar report comes from this prosperous village: "At this office we employ only two Negroes, both being janitors." Here is a wonderful town to be from.

Jacksonville, Fla.  
(42,000 Negroes)

The City Superintendent of the W. U. in this great democratic city replies that no Negroes are employed in clerical, skilled or managerial positions. The positions held by Negroes are: "Matron in rest room, messengers, porters, pressers, tailor bushelman, stock room attendant, and janitors." Which is by no means a deplorable record compared to other places, not even, for instance,

Dayton, Ohio  
(9,000 Negroes)

Where the W. U. folks tell us that they only have Negroes as janitors and porters.

#### POSTAL TELEGRAPH-CABLE COMPANY

Well, let's get away from that dear Western Union for a while and take a swift glance at its colleague. This company, you recall, is headed by the haughty gentleman who was so upset when Irving Berlin married his daughter. However, that is neither here nor there. Let us first stop at

Philadelphia, Pa.  
(135,000 Negroes)

Mr. R. L. Massey, the City Superintendent, replies at some length: "We employ a Negro in the dual capacity of storekeeper and janitor at our main office. In his duties as storekeeper he renders requisitions to our general headquarters for all supplies used in our service, which includes all the various forms of message blanks and necessary records. This work requires careful consideration as to the approximate number of the various forms required. We also employ a Negro to supervise the cleaning of approximately twenty-five branches throughout the city." If this janitor is so capable why doesn't Mr. Massey give him a better job? And the echo answers, "Why?"

Cleveland, Ohio  
(35,000 Negroes)

The kindness and liberality of the white people of Cleveland is proverbial. There is no lack of opportunity here, as shown by the following serenade from G. G. Vetter, the manager of the Postal's local office: "We have a Negro janitor and janitress in our employ at the local office." *Requiescat in pace!*

Kansas City, Mo.

Well! Well! Here we are back in old KaySee, where men are presumably He. The Postal Telegraph broadcast from this burg is shorter than a flapper's skirt. "No" is their answer to questions anent the employment of Negroes in skilled positions. "Janitor" is the reply regarding positions held by Negroes.



Atlanta, Ga.  
(63,000 Negroes)

From the headquarters of the K.K.K., the home of Marcus Garvey and the Stone Mountain Memorial, comes the reassuring message from J. O. Young, the Postal's manager: "We do not employ Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature. We employ a good many as messengers and janitors." That "signs off" the telegraph companies until next month, and we shall take a short journey among the telephone companies who collect so much money from Negroes in all parts of these so obviously United States.

#### TELEPHONE COMPANIES

The first station we pick up is

Raleigh, N. C.  
(9,000 Negroes)

where the Negroes are doing big things in common with the other folks of the town. It is reported that there is a good Negro school system and evidently the Southeastern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Co. is aware of the fact, since it replies that Negroes are "employed only as laborers and janitors."

Ft. Worth, Tex.  
(16,000 Negroes)

Whew! Took a long jump that time, didn't we, people? Right into the old home town of the Rt. Rev. J. Frank Norris, the celebrated Hound of Heaven, who recently added murder to his list of accomplishments. The Southwestern Bell Telephone Company here encourages its numerous Negro subscribers by hiring members of that race only as "janitors and cooks."

Galveston, Tex.  
(10,000 Negroes)

Equally liberal in opportunities offered to bright young Negroes is the Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. in the great, free city of Galveston. It tells us: "We only use one Negro for porter and two Negro women in cafeteria."

This closes the session for the telephone companies this month. We shall now consider the marvelous opportunities offered Negro labor by the

#### ELECTRIC GAS AND STREET RAILWAY COMPANIES

Yo'all know how much our folks spend for electricity and gas and street car fare, so I'm sure you'll be interested in seeing how much of what we spend in this way gets back into our pockets in the form of wages or salaries (which are only wages with a white collar on). We shall now visit the thriving city of

Seattle, Wash.  
(3,000 Negroes)

Mr. D. W. Henderson, General Superintendent of the Street Railway Division of the Department of Public Utilities, replies: "We do not employ any Negroes in skilled, clerical or managerial work."

Mr. J. D. Ross, Superintendent of the Lighting Department of the big Washington metropolis, replies at greater length than his colleague. Says he: "All the employees of the City of Seattle are obtained from competitive examinations held for all positions in the employ of the city, covering clerical, engineering, mechanical engineering, mechanics, and all classes of labor."

"The City Charter does not prohibit the Negro, if he a citizen of the city, taking the examination along with the others. Therefore, they have equal opportunity if they are qualified to pass the examination. Our experience in the City Lighting Department has been that very few enter the clerical service and there are quite a number in the labor service."

Well, that's what I call putting it up to the Negroes of Seattle. Let them write in now and tell us how many have taken the examinations.

## Cleveland, Ohio

Back to dear old Cleveland, that proud city by the shores of Lake Erie, across which so many barges of Canadian liquor skim southwards. Incline thine ear, then, and hear what Mr. Paul E. Wilson, Vice-President and Secretary of The Cleveland Railway Company, has to say: "We have Negroes in our employ in positions of skilled, clerical and managerial nature. The majority of Negro employees are, however, employed as laborers and for work of semi-skilled nature." All of which isn't so bad, but one wonders how many motor-men, conductors, stenographers, bookkeepers, etc., are taken from the ranks of the Negro workers.

Well, it's time to drop back down South again.

Dallas, Tex.  
(25,000 Negroes)

Ol' Dallas! Lawd toh-day! Who says ol' Dixie ain't gittin' bettah? Mr. W. L. Byrd of the Dallas Power & Light Company sends us the glad news that "we do not employ Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature and only employ them in the capacity of laborers and chauffeurs." Which may or may not have something to do with that song called "The Dallas Blues."

Well, while we're so far West, children, we might as well drop in to the City of Angels, where climate is *climate*.

Los Angeles, Calif.  
(16,000 Negroes)

This town, which is well known for its moonshine as well as its sunshine, to say nothing of its large colonies of such freaks as Spiritualists, Klansmen, Naturopaths, Christian Scientists, and cultists of all sorts, has the reputation of being very fair to the darker brother. Mr. C. A. Dykstra, Director of Personnel and Efficiency, Department of Water and Power, informs us: "The Negro is employed in the following positions with our department: Auto truck driver, elevator operator, mechanics (Kitchen or otherwise?--*Editor*) and janitors." This isn't so terrible, everything considered.

## Dayton, Ohio

So we finally got back here eh? Good town, Dayton! Nothing like living in the North where you have opportunities for advancement! For instance, Mr. Wm. L. Smith, General Manager of the Dayton Street Railway Company, says in reply to our query concerning Negroes employed in clerical or skilled positions: "It does not." The positions held by Negroes are, we are told: "Car-washers and janitors ONLY." Note the capitalization of the word "only."

But if we don't do so well in that dear old Dayton, on the street cars, how about our chances with a public utility in the glorious state of Pat Harrison and Vardaman, where chivalry is always Southern and white women are always pure and in need of protection?

Jackson, Miss.  
(10,000 Negroes)

Mr. S. W. Fordyce of the Mississippi Power and Light Company, which furnishes electricity and gas and street railway service, sends in a reply as brief as a bootlegger's conscience. "Laborers," says he, referring to the employment of Negroes.

## Philadelphia, Pa.

You've heard of the Mitten Management, of course! Yes! Well, the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company is under that management. They have a publication called "Service Talks" which is doubtless one of the narcotics for working-men usually used by open shop concerns. Mr. J. M. Shaw, the Editor of "Service Talks," writes: "P. R. T. employs Negroes in unskilled, semi-skilled (welders and grinders in Roadway Department) and supervisory positions (foremen in Roadway Department)." So much for the City of Brotherly Love. Now back to Dixie.

Raleigh, N. C.

In the old tobacco state! Mr. Wm. L. Yoder, Carolina Power & Light Company, steps right up and speaks his piece: "We have a colored foreman in charge of street railway track work, two colored patrolmen, and one colored chauffeur." Hip! Hip! Hooray!

Chicago, Ill.  
(110,000 Negroes)

From "Chicago! Chicago! That Wonderful Town!"--according to the popular song--comes a letter from the Assistant Employment Manager of the Chicago Rapid Transit Company, who says: "We do not employ Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature. . . . We employ about 110 Negroes in the capacity of porters at our stations and 10 as lampmen."

Cincinnati, Ohio  
(30,000 Negroes)

Memories of the old Cincinnati waterfront where heads were often bloodied though unbowed in the old days before the honky tonks became known as cabarets and the "rats" cast aside their overalls for dinner suits. So we come, in the course of our journey, to the Union Gas & Electric Company. The Assistant General Manager "gets us told" in the following manner: "We do not employ Negroes in positions of skilled, clerical or managerial nature. Negroes are employed in positions which do not require the foregoing qualifications. In our power stations several Negroes are employed as semi-skilled workmen performing jobs such as pipe covering." This will doubtless be welcome news to the graduates of Cincinnati's excellent jim-crow high school.

#### AMERICAN EXPRESS COMPANY

Without hesitation let us rush again to the Smoky City and see how the dark brother in search of a job stands with this big corporation.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Mr. T. J. Worthman, Resident Manager, hastens to reply. Says he: "This company does not employ Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature, in this city. We have one Negro in our office, employed as janitor."

Having received this inspiring news, let us again enter the dear old land of cotton--or should one say tobacco?

Raleigh, N. C.

Mr. Johnson, the agent, sends us the glad news that: "We are employing Negroes at this office as drivers and deliverymen." This is pretty good for little old Raleigh.

Camden, N. J.  
(8,500 Negroes)

Visions of Walt Whitman, Victor Talking Machines and Campbell's Pork and Beans! Ballads, Blues and Beans! Well, E. E. Stalitz, the local agent, breaks sad news to us: "This is to advise that no Negroes are employed at this office."

Cleveland, Ohio

Back to Cleveland, the city of tolerance by the lake, where "a man's a man for a' that," a sentiment which doubtless applies to Negroes also. And what sayeth the Resident Manager, Mr. J. G. Kehoe? Hist! the dark secret is about to be divulged! "There are no Negroes employed in this office," he says.

Atlantic City, N. J.  
(11,000 Negroes)

In our despair we flee to the booming shores of the broad Atlantic; to glorious Atlantic City where our dear dark brethren have the blessings of jim crow schools and a bathing beach ditto. And what murmureth the agent there? Why, the very same thing the agent in Cleveland said.

SOUTHEASTERN EXPRESS COMPANY

This is a public utility not affiliated with the American Express Co. It is said to be a subsidiary of the Southern Railroad. We heard recently from Mr. L. V. Allred, the agent at

Raleigh, N. C.

And what did the agent say? Well, it is quite favorable compared to the reports from many other places. Says he: "We only use Negroes as delivery men in positions other than laborers."

Further the deponent sayeth not until the blustery month of March.

*The Messenger*, 9 (February, 1927): 45-6.

15. NEGRO LABOR AND PUBLIC UTILITIES, III

By George S. Schuyler

*(Black citizens are forced to purchase the services of the various public utilities throughout the nation, just as other citizens are. There is no alternative. When, however, the Negro consumer as worker applies for a job at the telegraph office the express office or the offices of the companies selling street railway service, gas and electric light and power, he meets with a far from democratic reception. Here and there of course, you will find a dark brother or sister getting by, but such cases are few and far between. In previous numbers of the The Messenger we presented part of the facts gathered in a nation-wide survey. Over sixty cities, each with a Negro population of over 10,000, were covered. Below you will find the remainder of the glad news. Glance down and get an eyeful.)*

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

Note, dear readers, the following reply from Mr. W. H. Spry, City Superintendent at Newark, N. J. (16,977 Negroes), who very nicely avoids in his explanation a lot of things we dark folks might be interested in knowing.

"We employ no Negroes in Newark, probably in larger cities with more diversified requirements Negroes are employed in other than technical lines. The telegraph business is made up largely of the technical, as in cities where there is but one telegraph operator, such a person would be a manager and Morse operator and messenger combined, and as the cities are largely recruited from all sources including the messenger forces; progression takes place through the initiative of the individual." Yes, yes! Go on!

Then we jump down to dear old Knoxville, Tenn. (11,302 Negroes), where the local management sends us the reassuring news that Negroes are hired as janitors.

Further South we move, and finally we get to New Orleans where William A. Porteous, the City Superintendent, megaphones that the company only employs Negroes as "porters, elevator attendants and maids." This news will be received with enthusiasm by the young blacks in New Orleans who are anxious to carve out a career for themselves in this field.

Mr. S. S. Scothorn, the City Superintendent at San Antonio, Texas, (14,341 Negroes) sends us an equally encouraging radio from the shadow of the Alamo: "We have only two Negroes in our employ and they act in the capacity of janitors."

In Wilmington, Del., (10,746 Negroes) an even greater opportunity is given the ambitious Negro to improve himself, for Mr. C. J. Radman, the Manager, writes us: "Our company does not employ Negroes in the city of Wilmington."

As a sort of a joker, let me end this survey of the attitude of the Western Union Telegraph Company toward Negro labor by quoting from a letter sent in by Andrew F. Burleigh, Vice President and Secretary of the company located at the general offices, 105 Broadway, New York City. Says he: "We do employ Negroes without discrimination as far as I know, in positions which they appear at the time of employment to be competent to fill. (How about Messengers?--Ed.) As to just what positions they occupy I am not advised, as our operations are very widely extended and we have upwards of sixty thousand employees."

#### POSTAL TELEGRAPH-CABLE COMPANY

The first station we get on our trusty old three-tube set is Mobile, Ala., (23,906 Negroes). The manager tells us "Our two linemen here, at this writing, are Negroes," and says further that Negroes are employed "as linemen, porters and at one time as telegraph messengers."

Following which comes the stimulating report from Mr. J. T. Logue, Superintendent of the Fifth District, Southern Division, Jacksonville, Florida. "We employ Negroes in the district under my jurisdiction," says he, "which comprises the State of Florida, only as porters and messengers." So ends the investigation of the telegraph companies. It can be readily seen what splendid opportunities they offer the citizens of color.

#### TELEPHONE COMPANIES

There is no doubt but that the Negroes pay huge sums to the telephone trusts every month. Well, what chance have they when it comes to getting a job? Read on, Brother, read on!

Our first stop is Lexington, Ky., (12,450 Negroes). The Fayette Home Telephone Company sent in a nice snappy reply: "We employ four Negroes as follows--3 janitors and 1 maid."

Then Mr. W. S. Henley, the District Manager of the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company at Savannah, Ga., (39,179 Negroes) reports: "We do not employ Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature. We do employ Negroes as janitors, elevator men, maids and yardmen."

From the Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Co. Inc., at Meridian, Miss., (8,343 Negroes) we gather in the stimulating message that the descendants of Ham are employed only as common labor.

But do not despair, Oh, Children of the Sun! We are about to take a long trip to the liberal North, the land of opportunity. We drop our anchor at Gary, Ind., (16,460 Negroes). Mr. J. J. Carfoil, Commercial Manager of the Illinois Bell Telephone Co., greets us with the following:

"The Telephone Company at Gary (for whom I am the Local Business Manager), does not employ Negroes in positions of skilled, clerical and managerial nature. We do, however, occasionally employ them as janitors. At the present time there are in our employ at Gary, Ind., 162 Telephone men and women, all of whom are white." Hooray for the North!

The plot, or rather, the jobs thicken when we go back to Macon, Ga., (23,093 Negroes), where the District Manager of the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company, says: "Negroes are employed as groundmen, janitors, elevator operators, maids and cooks." It will be noted, however, that the way to higher positions is barred as elsewhere.

A similar report comes from the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company at Oklahoma City, Okla., (8,241 Negroes), where we learn from R. J. Benzal, the General Manager, that "We employ Negroes in positions of janitors, elevator operators, and assistants in the cafeteria." It will be observed that while we can wait on the white help, we cannot work with the white help.

#### AMERICAN EXPRESS COMPANY

We have, ladies and gentlemen, reports from just two more cities on the employment of Negroes by this big trust. Our first message comes from dear old, tolerant Miami, Fla. (9,270 Negroes), and the General Agent says,

"At Miami we do not employ any Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature. We employ Negroes in the capacity of laborers." So that's that!

The other radio reaches us from the good city of Winston-Salem, N. C., and here is what was said: "Employed as truck drivers and porters."

This concludes our survey of the big express trust. Like all of the companies, it practices jim crowism everywhere.

#### STREET CARS, GAS AND ELECTRIC POWER AND LIGHT COMPANIES

Dayton, O. (7,029 Negroes), is the first to claim our attention. The City Railway Company, which doubtless has many Negro passengers, tells us that it employs six Negroes: 5 car washers and 1 janitor.

Then comes the Dayton Street Railway Company saying, "Janitors and Car Washers." Fine town, Dayton!

But the Roanoke Gas Light Company gives the dark brother a much better break than that, for they report that they have one gas house foreman "37 years' experience with this company, salary \$180 per." Besides it has employed "2 firemen, 1 ass't. foreman, 2 water gas makers, 2 gas main caulkers, 20 laborers and gas makers."

Moving to the westward, we hear from the Nashville Railway and Light Company, doing business in the capital city of Tennessee (35,633). "Laborers only," is the sad refrain from the Athens of Aframerica.

Back to Ole Virginny. We stop at Richmond (54,041 Negroes), and get an earful from Mr. Geo. H. Whitfield, Director, Department of Public Utilities. That worthy tells us, "The City of Richmond does not employ Negroes directly. However, it lets out to contract considerable street work and the contractors employ Negroes for excavation and common labor." All the Negro employes need then, is a strong back and a weak brain.

Cultured Boston (16,350 Negroes), now enters the discussion with a short contribution from the General Manager of the Boston Elevated Railway. Says he: "We make no discrimination whatever in the employment of labor. Practically all of the Negroes in our employ are porters. We have one Negro employe in car service." Wonder does this company employ black clerks, bookkeepers, motormen, etc? Now don't laugh!

A rather unusual radio comes our way from Baltimore (108,322 Negroes), in the celebrated Maryland Free State, where the mention of Prohibition is taboo. Says Mr. Geo. D. Penniman, Jr., Assistant Manager of the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company of Baltimore, "We have no Negro employes on clerical work but have a large number on work requiring semi-skilled men in connection with the manufacture and distribution of gas. Also, in the distribution work we have in the past used to advantage a few capable Negroes in the capacity of Foreman. . . . I will list below some of the occupations on which we have Negroes working: Porters, Laborers, Foreman, Tapper, Chauffeur, Caulker, Pipe Layer, Cement Finisher, Boiler Operator, Fire Cleaner."

The Chief Engineer of the Indianapolis (34,678 Negroes) Light and Heat Company, says, in reply to our query, "We do not employ Negroes for positions of skilled, clerical or managerial nature. They are employed only for ordinary labor work." So!

But the Secretary of the Indianapolis Street Railway Company somewhat cheers us by the following message (I said "somewhat"): "This company employs a large number of Negroes in various positions, to one of whom is intrusted the conveying of cash from the different car stations to the Terminal Station Counting Room. Some of the Assistant Foremen in the Track Department are also of the colored race. A large number fill janitor and assistant janitor positions." But suppose a Negro wants something better than a laboring, janitor or messenger job. Will he get it? That, as Hamlet said, is the question.

From Washington (109,966 Negroes), the place where all the run-down lawyers go, Mr. A. G. Neal, Vice President and Comptroller of the Washington Railway and Electric Company, writes: "They are not employed in clerical positions or in a managerial capacity. Our records indicate they serve us in the following capacities: Curve greasers and switchmen, Pitmen, Truck operators, Watchmen and Lampmen, Pavers, Compressor operators, Power Saw, Concrete mixer operators, 1st Class Trackmen, 2nd Class Trackmen, Laborers, Storeroom helper." Some day this company may have openings for Howard graduates. I said *some day*!

The Potomac Electric Power Company, which is the same as the above named concern and of whom the same gentleman occupies the same position, reports: "There are four Negroes employed as Foremen of Overhead Line groups and Conduit Construction groups, composed of Negro employees. There are other Negro employees employed as Linemen and Laborers, and a few as Messengers." Probably Kelly Miller was right when he said that Washington is "Negro Heaven."

The following sweet note arrived from Mr. S. E. Linton, General Manager, Nashville Gas and Heating Company: "We have about 175 Negro employees, who are loyal, faithful and intelligent, and of a high class of laborers, many of whom have been with the company for many years. Most of them are unskilled laborers, some are semi-skilled and some are mechanics. These employees are all good citizens. Many own their homes, or are buying them, and they find and fill a most needed place in the economic life of this community."

From the Mobile Gas Company, however, we get the sad news that Negroes are only employed as laborers.

Going North a bit we stop in Augusta, Ga. (22,582 Negroes), and hear a heartening message from the General Manager of the Augusta-Aiken Railway and Electric Corporation. He tells us, "We have some six or eight skilled Negro linemen, working under a white foreman. We employ linemen, helpers, pitmen in car shops, car cleaner and track and roadway forces."

Then comes a radio from the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company telling us that Negroes are employed there as "common laborers, brick masons, unskilled class of power plant work, garage helpers, washers, drivers of passenger cars, mail distributors and reception room clerks." All of which isn't bad for Cleveland.

Back down South again to Macon, Ga. (23,093 Negroes), and the Macon Railway and Light Co., the Macon Gas Co., and the Central Georgia Power Company, all report that they employ no Negroes. Dear old Georgia!

Thence west to the land of sunshine, fakirs and movies--California. Mr. R. B. Hill, the superintendent of operation of the Los Angeles Railway, tells us: "The Los Angeles Railway employs Negroes only as janitors, scrubbers, and car cleaners." That's good advertising for California, yes?

But the Gulf States Utilities Company at Beaumont, Texas (13,210 Negroes) doesn't do as well as the City of Angels, for we received the laconic reply: "Laborers."

And then we go to Florida (as all good Americans eventually do) and we land in Miami. There Mr. A. L. Reynolds of The Miami Beach Railway Company, says: "We do not employ Negroes in positions of a skilled, clerical or managerial nature. However, the Negroes are employed for labor on track work, car cleaners and porters." So much for beautiful Miami!

But the Oklahoma Railway Company of Oklahoma City, Okla. (8,241 Negroes), sends in a reply even less encouraging: "We have some Negroes employed as laborers."

From the shadow of Lookout Mountain we receive this heartening note, sent in by the Chattanooga (18,000 Negroes) Gas Company: "Trench and ditch diggers." What may we ask, could be shorter, if not sweeter?

We return to the Alamo again and get a word from Mr. Wm. W. Holden, Mgr. of the Traction Department of the San Antonio, Texas Public Service Company. He says: "The San Antonio Public Service Company employs Negroes as car cleaners, building porters and as helpers to skilled mechanics. Two of the Negroes are sub-foremen over groups of Negro car cleaners." From the other branches of the company furnishing gas and electricity to the 15,000 Negroes, we learn that Negroes are only employed as "porters, laborers, etc."

The South Carolina Power Company at Charleston, S.C., sends in this brief answer to our query: "We employ Negroes as power house firemen, helpers, porters and common laborers." Which isn't the worst record imaginable.

Last, but surely not least, we publish the reply of Mr. Neil Callahan, President of the Vicksburg Gas Company in Vicksburg, Miss. (9,148 Negroes): "We have four Negroes in our employ in skilled positions; two as operators, one as fireman and one as pipe fitter, and all four of these are good steady men."

"In addition to this we have five Negroes in our employ as assistants to white mechanics and they are all good steady men."

"When laying mains and such like work during every summer period, we employ quite a number of Negroes as common laborers at good wages." Suppose the public utilities did as much elsewhere.

So here endeth our first survey. Our readers may not know it, but the vast majority of these companies are in reality owned and controlled by a mere handful of people, although the companies all have different names. How is it done, you ask? Interlocking directorates is the answer. The Big Boys who own the large hunks of stock in these companies are all hot for the Tuskegee-Hampton type of education and swear by all the Gods that education will solve the race problem. But the real race problem is the problem of wages, labor and promotion, and these Big Boys make no effort to break down the color discrimination in industry that relegates the Negro generally to the lowest places in the industrial hierarchy. Many of these Big Utilities Men are on the Boards of Trustees of little Negro colleges and get off a swarm of wisecracks at meetings of the Interracial Commission and at Commencements, but you can see what hope they hold out generally to our young men and women.

*The Messenger*, 9 (April, 1927): 116-17.

#### 16. REID TELLS OF FIGHT FOR SKILLED WORKERS

*(In an effort to stimulate constructive thinking, on vital problems affecting the Race today, The Courier is asking various leaders in their respective fields for expressions on the peculiar problems which they meet in their own work. For this reason we present in full an address delivered by Mr. Ira De Augustine Reid, Industrial Secretary of the New York Urban League, before the National Urban League Conference in St. Louis recently. The subject of the address is "Advertising Negro Labor," and represents the avenue of approach to get better and higher trained colored workers in better and higher positions among white employers. Mr. Reid was born in Clifton Forge, Va., took an A.B. degree from Morehouse College, Atlanta, and M.A. from the University of Pittsburgh. He has taught school at the Douglas High at Huntington, W. Va., and at Texas College, Tyler, Tex. He did industrial research work for one year with the Pittsburgh Urban League and has been head of the industrial department of the New York Urban League two years. He recently won praise on Broadway for his acting in "The Fool's Errand," a play presented in the National Little Theatre tournament by the Negro Little Theatre of Harlem.)*

By IRA DE A. REID<sup>6</sup>

NEW YORK, May 26.--The industrial work of the Urban League is a true embodiment of the organization's slogan: "Not Alms, But Opportunity." Thus our policy becomes that of securing jobs for Negroes which they have not been able to secure because of racial discriminations, and on securing the better types of position which admit to advancement, that have been denied them, because of their failure to qualify, or because of the policy--or lack of policy--of employers regarding the advancement of Negroes.

Many other problems align themselves with this one cause, such as those concerning organized labor double standards of wages, improvement in working conditions, adjustment, housing vocational guidance and matters of similar ilk. Therefore, we find ourselves meeting the employee and the trade unions on their own planes since the problems have much in common. Our problem is not alone that of taking the end out of blind alleys for Negro workers, nor is it providing new opportunities for them. There remains the more deep-seated opinions of employers regarding Negro workers. For these persons there must be an informational and educational program, regarding the group. The workers are not over alert--they likewise must be encouraged and taught. Moreover, they must be provided with reasonable channels of growth into other and bigger jobs, if they develop the ability; they must have a feeling of security and permanence in the job and the chance to grow; they must be made to feel a part of their organization, this being more than a matter of good intentions, which when weakly acted upon are scarcely better than intentions deliberately bad. These situations are the problems of Negro workers and tend to make them victims in the waste of a good labor supply. This is the field of Urban League's



industrial work. For the colored group it is doing what immigrant groups have long since regarded as essential and have established. Likewise, governments, state and municipal have worked for the disabled, minors and handicapped.

Acting upon these bases the advertising of Negro labor may include every conscious manifestation of the effort which is likely to influence the will of the public toward securing a better understanding of the Negro worker. This would include education, propaganda in its favorable sense, promotion, advertising and even salesmanship.

Of paramount importance is the status of the agency that is advertising Negro labor. It is very necessary that the attention of the public should constantly be attracted to its service--to make known its purpose, policy, program, and needs in order that the best work may be done. And not this alone, for the same agency must enlist confidence in itself, possess a certain amount of prestige, and create an active good-will. Publicity and educational work on Negro labor per se will not achieve these benefits; i.e., efficient service is essential, but not sufficient. The slogan: "The right goods will sell themselves"--is only partially true in respect to our problem. The inherited attitude of the public toward the Negro, rearranged prejudices, the complexities of modern life, etc., make a well-formed system of advertising absolutely necessary.

Every Urban League has as its fundamental part of the industrial leg of the problem, the securing of better types of jobs for the better types of Negro workers. Aside from the needs that arise from day to day as that of the laborer, domestic worker, porter, and errand boys, there is need for work with a more advanced group, and even for improving the less advanced. No Industrial Department can afford to sit idly by and believe that the mere placement of large numbers of individuals is sufficient to endorse its program, as there are certain types of work for which Negroes are accepted without question. This we admit, and seek to secure the right type for the situation. But above all, our efforts should be to improve and not merely sanction. The use of Negro labor is governed by the non-economic law of "Supply and Demand and Race." For this reason, the placement of Negro labor becomes a highly technical business if done correctly. It likewise demands secretaries who have the closest contacts with employers and workers alike. Hence, the publicity attached to our efforts to place the use of Negro labor before the employing public does play a very large part in our program.

One of the most useful methods in advertising Negro labor is through canvassing or soliciting. The interviewing of employers to impress upon them personally the worth of Negro labor--especially the skilled type--is a very important function. In our New York office, it is called "Field Work." Others may know it by "Salesmanship," "Job Soliciting," or "Procurement Work." It is our experience that when such employers are interviewed, it is advisable to see the man at the top, or such persons as will have a determining voice in the selection of employees. Usually the employment of Negro workers is such a reversal of the existing order, that only his sanction is worthwhile. To such an employer, the field worker must make himself an asset and not a liability to the cause which he is representing. He must not beg for jobs, nor must he leave the impression that his organization is a relief one, dealing entirely with the less fortunate ones of our group. The employer is to be convinced of the value of a group of employees as a necessary part of his industrial or commercial agency. After all, the major requirement is that the representative know his product. Any person seeking to make openings for Negro workers should have either a mental or physical memorandum of the outstanding situations regarding Negro labor, both local and national. What are the chief occupations of Negro workers in your city and throughout the country? What has been the increase and decrease in industry within the last ten years? What are the outstanding industries in your city? How are Negroes distributed in these industries and other places? More than 10,000 colored women are being employed as stenographers and bookkeepers. How many of these work in Milwaukee, Boston, Atlanta, etc? If you are asking an employer to use Negro clerks, mechanics, bookkeepers, cite to him other institutions similar to their appeal that employ such persons--or show him the advantage of being the one to prove that Negro workers are capable of performing functions similar to those in which white persons are employed, and as efficiently.

In the second place, it should be the aim of every office to secure as

much news space as possible regarding their work. How much cooperation have you secured through the local and daily papers in your city? Has there been any unique situation arising in connection with your work that would make a good news article? Do reporters from the Negro papers call at your office for information? Such publicity must have indirect value toward attracting attention to the work you are trying to do. May I cite a few things that the New York press deemed worthy of publication? We interviewed a large employer relative to the employment of colored help and secured jobs for fifteen men. This is in itself news. But it was necessary that we send down to these jobs at least thirty-five individuals before the required quota was filled. Why? Because they failed to pass the health examination. One of the local papers carried an additional article the following week entitled: "Physically Unfit Denied Good Jobs." At another time we were interested in finding out the number of economic misfits in New York, i.e., individuals who were unable to secure jobs for which they were trained and were employed in less skilled capacities. Through the courtesy of one of our papers we published an Opportunity Blank which we asked to be returned to this office. This blank asked the occupation of the person, and if such person was working on the job for which he was trained. If not, why not? It created quite a sensation. Many replies were received. When they were collected, they furnished an additional news article which was printed by the Negro paper and in turn mentioned in an article in one of the dailies. It is also possible for your office to be the outstanding agency for the release of current information on the labor market. New openings that have been made, lay-offs, or placements during the week, general industrial information.

It would be impossible to deal at length with the many other methods of putting over our product, but I shall mention a few more. The use of want-ad columns of newspapers is sometimes very feasible procedure. I am of the opinion that Negro workers do not use the want-ad columns as much as they could. These pages are read to a great extent by employers. An insertion in these papers at irregular intervals throughout the year would be worth the slight expense incurred. One call from an employer who is interested in fostering the Negro enterprise and securing additional labor would be worth the amount expended.

Urban Leagues are in a very unique situation in the majority of cities in which they are located. They have the constant advantage of being able to voice the sentiments and needs of the people they represent. What is your approach industrially to these groups? Is your approach a positive or a negative one? Do you speak of the disadvantage that they suffer or the advantages that could be had by its being used to a greater extent? How much advantage do you take of the meetings you attend to speak on Negro labor? The medium of public address forms one of the best possible avenues toward affecting some solution to our problems. This can be done through the organized clubs of the city, as well as through special meetings that are called at your instance.

Printed matter may also be of value if it makes a presentable appearance. Flimsy advertising appears to be of no value, and worse than that, to be a liability. Our office has used form letters to a small extent within the last year, but has relied chiefly upon an employment bulletin at regular intervals which we send out to employers with a list of the available applicants at our office, stating their qualifications and amount of experience. Through this method we have been able to put before the employer in concise form, the type and number of persons we have available for his line of work. We have also issued pamphlets--one for the employer and one for the employee--samples of which are available here.

Campaigns are usually sporadic efforts at attacking the same problem. If, however, the campaign may be followed by intensive efforts in the same channels, the result may be far better than that expected. Aside from the efforts conducted by the Department of Industrial Relations in other cities, our office undertook an employment campaign for Harlem. You probably know that the 175,000 Negroes in Harlem have very little opportunity to work in the stores of that immediate neighborhood. For a long time it has been the cry of persons that something should be done. Seventy-five per cent of the money that Negroes in Harlem earn, is said to be spent with Harlem merchants. For this, they were given no opportunity to work in these stores in which they spent. With the assistance of representatives of other social and fraternal organizations in the community, we launched a campaign for the employment of Negro workers

in these stores. In the beginning a survey was made of all the stores in the immediate neighborhood employing three or more workers. We found that 10 of the larger commercial enterprises employing three or more workers had only 163 Negroes, or less than 1-20 of the total number of employees. To them we appealed first through individual letters in which we enclosed literature on what the employer should know about Negro labor. These were followed by interviews. Memoranda were made of the replies of each employer and from time to time some representative of the Department called upon these employers with the view of having him employ colored help. Publicity in this connection played a very important part. Colored newspapers rallied to our support and featured the effort with headlines. One of the dailies with a section devoted to Harlem carried an article on the effort Ministers organized for the effort and announced it from their pulpits. The whole community was urged to join in the campaign to provide employment for Negro workers. From the publicity point of view its success is not to be doubted. Many valuable insights gained regarding employers attitudes toward Negro workers gave us a more complete understanding of the problems we faced. Large numbers of employers took the matter quite seriously. At the first meeting of the Harlem Board of Trade and Commerce, to which body we had addressed a request for a hearing, many of the members brought their letters. It was discussed, pro and con, though tabled at two subsequent meetings. In this effort members of the Urban League Board co-operated in an effort to secure the privilege of speaking to this body. Though this campaign was held four months ago, it still brings results. Many have thought our approach wrong. Others did not agree with us, but nevertheless, we started a line of thinking which would not have been possible under ordinary conditions.

In conclusion, we feel that there is needed an intelligent work among employers as to the suitability of colored workers for certain kinds of work, many more kinds than have heretofore been acknowledged. If a Negro with a high school or college training is held down to the common laborer or porter job because of prejudices when he otherwise might be employed as an executive or in other more productive labor, both he and industry suffer as unnecessary economic loss. The educational work however, should not be limited to the employer. It is important to show workers that with the proper diligence in industry, they can fit themselves for places which will mean personal advancement and will help them to reach spheres of greater usefulness and responsibility.

*Pittsburgh Courier*, May 28, 1927.

#### 17. YOUTH TOLD TO GET INTO THE TRADES

CHARLESTON, N.C., June 2--"Teach the mass of the Negroes the dignity and distinction of productive labor."

This is the advice of Thomas E. Posey, professor of economics at West Virginia Collegiate Institute. It was given in a public statement prepared by him last week in which he discussed the economic problems of his race.

"This is an age of industrialism and materialism," he says. "Money talks. The Negro, if he intends to keep pace with the present age must prepare himself for those lines of productive activities which yield him the greatest return."

"At the present time all of the skilled workers in the building trades are making from eight to fifteen dollars a day. Skilled workmen in all other lines of work rarely earn below six dollars a day. The average yearly wage of a skilled workman is \$1,800 according to the report of the Department of Labor. The average yearly wage of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, according to the study made by the national industrial conference, was \$1,200. This study was made in 1923. In other words, approximately three-fourths of the Negroes are earning around one thousand to twelve hundred a year. In 1923, according to the Monthly Labor Review, it required at least \$1,400 to maintain a family of five on the bare subsistence level.

## Economic Status

"The problem which confronts the Negro is that of raising his economic status. The Negro, if he is to make any great progress in the future, must develop a strong middle class. He must enter in greater numbers into the skilled works. He must prepare himself to share more in the fruits of this industrial age. The attention of the young Negro must be focused more on the trade and less on the profession. Doctors, lawyers, teachers and ministers, among our group, are living too near the bare subsistence level themselves, not because there are too many but because most Negroes are not earning enough to pay them."

"Most young Negroes who have an opportunity to go to school select a profession as their vocation. There is a stigma attached to manual labor for the colored boy. It is one of his slave heritages. In order to be a gentleman, he must have a soft hands and wear a white collar. A pair of overalls is degrading; it should be a badge of distinction. This attitude is fostered and maintained by the parents, by the ministers, by our fraternities and our leading professional men. Young men should be guided into the technical fields. Parents should say: 'Son, be an auto-mechanic, radio expert, scientific farmer,' instead of 'Get an A.B. degree.'" An A.B. degree gives one culture, but it is of no practical advantage.

"The writer does not contend that the development of a middle class would be a panacea of all the evils reflected in the Negro race. But surely if you raise his economic level he will be much better off. One way to raise this level is to enter the skilled trades. The question then arises, how can this be done. We must start in the home, parents must encourage their children to take a trade. Ministers, teachers and leaders of our people must preach about the dignity of productive labor. Most Negroes have the idea that when industrial education is presented to them, you are suggesting that they are inferior, that students are supposed to take trades who don't have the mental capacity to get the arts and sciences. This is a very vicious and erroneous impression. Parents tell their children, 'I want you to go to school.' Let us offer scholarships to leading trade schools and agricultural colleges, let us have a better plumber, carpenter and skilled mechanic week. Let us give prizes for the best method of raising potatoes and designing and building beautiful homes."

## Technical Training

"Restricted immigration, greater opportunities in the industries in the north makes it imperative that the colored man turn his attention to technical training. Colored boys should be encouraged to become scientific farmers, architects, landscape gardeners, radio experts, chemical engineers. The problem of economic betterment should be of vital import to all Negroes. At the present time we have in our race two classes of Negroes. One group, which constitutes the masses in the lowest strata of our Socio-economic system. The other group which is very small is to the white collar and professional class. The upper class has no sympathy with this lower class. He is so busy imitating and proving to the white man that he is mentally and physically his equal, that he has no time for the masses. Leisure time activities presupposes a surplus accumulation of wealth, and productive economic activities to maintain that surplus. We must encourage and produce industrial education for the masses and as one educator has very wisely said, 'Education for the man lowest down.' Teach the masses of Negroes the dignity and distinction of productive labor."

*Pittsburgh Courier*, June 4, 1927.

# 18. LACK OF RACE CONSCIOUSNESS RESPONSIBLE FOR NEGLECT IN RAISING ECONOMIC STATUS

Harlem Industrial Expert Points Remedy After  
Analyzing Problem of "Too Few Jobs"  
In Community

By Ira De A. Reid  
(Industrial Secretary of the New York Urban League)

NEW YORK, Aug. 18.--Aside from the fact that many employers state that Negro workers do not have the necessary experience, they also maintain that they do not have the time to teach anybody while they are in need of help. If some of them do decide to take on a Negro person, they are willing to do so only at a salary far below that which would have been offered a white person. In such a situation, it is unwise to so affect the wage scale by underbidding another race group. With what other reasons do employers defend their attitude of not employing colored persons. Often they say that colored are not reliable. A caterer who had employed from 20 to 30 colored waiters found that he could do far better with white waiters because his colored waiters seldom showed up on time and often when they did, they were not in position to serve a respectable party. Many a time have employees been sent from our office as well as other offices in the city on particular jobs on which they promised to report immediately. Fully 40% of them never go. Sometime ago we interviewed managers of several employment agencies as to the difficulties they have faced in placing Negro help. Some of their answers follow: "The characteristic faults of the Negro workers are attending to somebody else's business, tardiness, and lack of conscientiousness," "Not intelligent enough," "Not reliable," "Inability to maintain a consistently high level of work," "Tendency to disregard time," "Tendency to 'lay off' on the slightest pretext," "Not inclined to work steadily," "Lack of concerted action to initiate better relations among themselves," "Will not take time to study and prepare himself for his chance when it does come," "Haughtiness," "Wasteful!" "The more he gets, the more he lavishes," "He does not wait until he has a firm step on the uphill road to success."

Many employment workers in the city have noted the changes that are taking place in the employment of Negro workers. New apartment houses are employing white help almost entirely. No longer does one see the Negro doorman or footman. Negro chauffeurs in the better private families are seldom found. It is said that the better shops on Fifth avenue now prefer a "white front," that is, white employees as doormen and footmen instead of colored as heretofore. It has been rumored that a movement was being started to prevent the employment of colored men as elevator operators in certain sections of the city. Many high class dress shops and millinery shops that formerly employed colored girls are now using white only. The same situation is true in the leather trade. In the personal service jobs such as office maid, maid in a beauty parlor, etc., there seems to be a tendency to make the colored girls not so much assistants, as cleaners and porters. In many occupations which are open for which white girls would not be employed at a salary less than \$16, agencies are forced to accept an offer of \$10 and \$12 for colored girls. But there have been some advances. The manager of a large dress shop which was formerly located in the heart of Harlem wrote: "I have had colored employees in my store in the capacity of saleswomen since 1925. At that time it was impossible to obtain anyone who had previous experience. A few who were trained here found no difficulty in obtaining similar employment elsewhere. At present, colored saleswomen are employed here exclusively." Another concern to which we sent a colored man as clerk wrote: "We are pleased to advise you that Mr. X sent to our employ by your League is still in our employ, and his services are satisfactory in every way. During his association with us, he has proved himself worthy of our highest esteem, and we feel that he is a credit to the Negro people of the community."

Among the concerns in Harlem who are employing colored at present in other capacities than that of porter or cleaner are: Wonder Store, Inc., 2595 Eighth avenue--Saleswomen; George Hiatt, 126 West 125th street--Saleswomen; Gordon Grocery Store, 2444 Seventh avenue--Clerk; Hy-Grade Market, 551 Lenox avenue--Clerk; Walter Piano Store, 164 West 125th street--Collector; Biddle Piano Company, 24 West 125th street--3 Collectors; Singer Sewing Machine Company, 10 East 125th street--5 Salesmen; Manufacturing Chemists and Perfumers, 26 West 125th street--Assistant Laboratory man and Receiving Clerk; Dreyer's Furniture Company, 660 Lenox avenue--Cabinet Maker; Frank Meyer's Hardware Company, 468 Lenox avenue--Clerk.

There is much more work that can be done, but it only can be done if the Negro population is willing to start any active move to inaugurate a movement

of Negroes in jobs which are closed to them. Despite the fact that Harlem is a closely-knit racial community, it has very little of the race consciousness that expresses itself in a constructive way. There is no doubt but that if a riot occurred in New York, Harlem would be a well defended section, but for the gross injustices that are practiced in this section of the city, the community has not awakened to the fact that they can be combated--and successfully. They have not yet realized that Negro business can be more highly developed through their patronage. Not yet do they believe that a high class colored business man can be just as reliable as one of another race. Harlem must awaken to its needs.

*Pittsburgh Courier*, August 20, 1927.

#### 19. NEGRO WORKER O.K. IF HANDLED RIGHT

Calvin Continues Examination of "The Negro In Industry"  
By Floyd J. Calvin

NEW YORK, Apr. 12.--Continuing my examination of the booklet, "The Negro in Industry," which is the official publication of the American Management Association, 20 Vesey street, and which represents what Big Business thinks of the Negro, I find under "The Character of the Negro" this:

"Some people seem to believe that the Negro is entirely inferior to the white man and that no discussion is necessary. 'The Negro is different physically, temperamentally and psychologically.' Yet he has a heart and a stomach which react to medicine and food in exactly the same way as with whites. What distinguishes the Negro from others is his history, his color and his environment. The Negro has been a slave for generations; he has been the underdog since his emancipation. He is thereby ignorant, and industrially inefficient since he has a rural rather than an industrial training. Given the same treatment, the same environment and the same opportunity he might not be so very different from the white man except in color. The fact remains, however, we have to consider him as we find him.

"The Negro is a slow thinker; his mind has not been trained and thus he often misunderstands simple directions. Being a slow thinker he is slow in action and hence dubbed stupid. If he grasps a situation, however, he may be relied on to do his share. His history has made him suspicious, but this condition may be overcome by plain, square dealing. The Negro is unsteady from the factory point of view; he is unaccustomed to the discipline of industry; he has not been used to the daily grind, but training and persistence gradually brings him in line. He likes intermittent rather than monotonous work, we all do. He prefers indoor to outdoor work in Winter simply because he is unaccustomed to cold and, besides he is subject to pulmonary disease. Likewise, he prefers outdoor work in Summer and can stand more heat than would be good for others.

"Responsibility is not readily accepted by people who recognize their limitations and the Negro has been made to see this. This does not imply that no Negro should be given a responsible position because it is good practice to give every worker responsibility to the limit of his capacity. The Negro is credited with small regard for the truth, low cunning and so forth, but these are the relics of slavery and subsequent events. We talk of the idle, rather than the lazy, colored worker, but laziness sometimes aids him to find out the easiest way to work and his vice becomes a virtue; he uses his head to save his brawn. Some employers find the Negro irregular in attendance while the majority find him no worse than others."

Concerning "The Negro as an Industrial Worker" the report says: "... The evidence as is, establishes the general fact that the Negro is capable and there is the further confirmation that he is being found, in ever increasing numbers, in coal, iron and steel, stockyards, building and transportation.

"Some well marked mental and physical differences exist between white and colored workers that demand attention. Even if the Negro is handicapped by slow thinking, he, at least, has a knowledge of English which, in almost every

occupation, gives him an advantage over the foreign born white worker. But, a little patience will overcome slow thinking whereas no amount of patience can overcome the language barrier between the foreigner and the foreman and neither is the least likely to acquire the language of the other. . . . The advantage the Negro has in a knowledge of English is likely to hold for a long time in spite of adult Americanization. Consequently, in semi-skilled jobs where there is a possibility of vestibule training, or where verbal directions are necessary, the Negro may be employed to advantage. In jobs where neither language, reading nor writing is a factor the choice between Negro and foreign-born white is a question of physical skill and experience. Julian Carr, of the Durham Hosiery Company, is credited with the statement that net receipts from the colored mills were greater than those from the white mills and the obvious inference is that the result was due to the relative production of each."

Big Business compares Negro and white workers physically as follows: "Physically speaking, the Negro is inferior to the white if we are to judge by mortality statistics, and this lowers the value of Negro labor from the industrial standpoint. . . . As regards Negro health, one factor has been the poor dwelling and living conditions to which he has been accustomed in the South and which he has not altogether escaped by his change of residence. It is hence inadvisable for an employer to take on Negro labor extensively without considering housing."

Of "The Negro and Organized Labor," the report says: "The directing heads of organized labor have frequently declared against discrimination, yet the individual national and international unions have excluded the Negro in spite of their general desire to increase their numbers. The American Federation of Labor, however, cannot compel its constituents to adopt any given policy--it can only make recommendations. The reason for exclusion is commonly believed to be founded in race prejudice, but a far more likely explanation is that, as in the limitation of apprentices, a large influx of Negroes would spoil the market and lower wages thereby."

On "Relations With Other Workers" the report says: "Usually the relations between white and colored workers are amicable enough. . . . The attitude of the management is generally the determining factor. If the Negro is hired with the actual or supposed idea of displacement, and effecting thereby a reduction in wages, there is sure to be trouble."

Big Business says further: "The efficiency of the Negro is an open question. Some employers find him capable because they make him so. They instruct the foreman how to handle him, give him the necessary training, select him carefully and provide adequate supervision. In other cases the Negro is found to be shiftless, unstable and generally worthless."

"The Negro is willing and content to do the hard, dirty, disagreeable jobs at low pay as a means of ultimately improving his position. He prefers intermittent rather than continuous, repetitive work. His nature conforms to the rhythm of work and he likes occasional spectacular exhibitions of his strength. In jobs that demand complex movements he fails until he has been subjected to rigorous training. Employers of long experience claim that Negroes always give a fair day's work if they are treated right. . . . Rub a cat the wrong way and you find he spits and scratches; stroke him, and everything is all right."

*Pittsburgh Courier*, April 14, 1928.

## 20. ECONOMIC GOALS

The year 1928 with employment conditions improved and industry on the up-grade. Labor admits it and capital advertises it. William Butterworth, President of the United States Chamber of Commerce, reminds, in the *January Nation's Business* that "production has been brought to a state of amazing proficiency" and assures that "there is no reason to believe that the rapid pace we have attained during the past decade will lag in the next." Taking advantage of this situation and the heralded industrial potentialities of the

South, the American Federation of Labor launches a goal for a double membership in 1929. "This goal," says the *American Federationist*, "is a spur to union activity and places an obligation upon each union to go into the unorganized field and make new converts to unionism."<sup>9</sup>

Negroes are neither manufacturers nor trade unionists to any considerable degree. All three labor for a common purpose, that of advancing personal and collective well-being, but the eternal struggle for advantage goes on among them, with the Negro at the bottom and farthest removed from economic possibilities. The labor movement and the employing group state their goals for 1929--what does the Negro hope to attain? His handicap is at once apparent. Who is there to state it? What organized force represents Negro economic thought? The system under which this race lives in the United States leaves no room for divisive aims as regards workers and owners. The few owners are dependent upon white relationships and in reality are workers for others. The Negro is thus a homogeneous economic group and as such should set out to realize certain definite objectives.

As fundamental as the economic causation of life is, it has been almost entirely by Negroes in their quest for recognition in art, music, literature, religion and politics. The time to emphasize this relationship is now, when industry is having a rebirth and when a new governmental administration, which will seek to make good its prophecies of prosperity, so soon to take over the direction of the nation. New industries are adding capital. Mechanical changes affecting all workers, particularly those that are unskilled, are being installed daily and the Negro workers' overwhelming strength in the South where ninety per cent of the population still lives, is in danger of serious impairment by the coming of Northern industrialists who are pledged all the Caucasian labor they wish.

If the A.F. of L. is "to go into the unorganized field and make new converts to unionism," geographically it must enter the South where it has relatively few adherents and where Negroes do a large share of the manual work; and occupationally they must organize within the steel, iron, automobile, meat-packing and coal industries which are those in which the largest number of colored wage-earners are engaged. In Detroit there are 15,000 Negroes in one automobile factory alone; in Pittsburgh one coal company employs 3,000; while the steel mills of Gary, Youngstown and Chicago, the foundries in Birmingham, St. Louis and throughout Ohio and the stockyards in Chicago and Omaha team with Negro workers whose future, judging from the bias of the labor movement, is uncertain in a program of union organization.

There is much to guide our understanding of the Negro's present occupational status. He can always find work when work is to be had; that is when employment is normal. It is under-employment that he suffers from--the failure to find opportunities commensurate with capacity and the fixity of a status that permits of no chance for personal development and promotion. And this at the time when he is in the best physical and mental state he has yet possessed. To be certain he has made progress in many directions and especially in the building trades, garment making, the basic industries, automobile repairing and manufacturing, and transportation. As yet Negro girls have little other than menial work and liberally schooled young men are without outlet for their training. Chain stores, insurance companies, public utilities and commercial houses that are patronized freely by Negroes and which in many cases use workers of a given nationality to attract customers of that nationality, refuse employment to Negroes. Apartment houses exclude them from service occupations they once filled and many traditional employments have been taken away.

*Opportunity*, 7 (February, 1929): 57.

## 21. THE PRESENT STATUS OF NEGRO LABOR

By T. Arnold Hill<sup>10</sup>

The popular notion that Negro workers are being forced to recede from the favorable position they acquired during and after the war has called forth



extravagant estimates as to the extent of the loss and from all directions solutions and panaceas have come. I hope only to point out that Negro workers are shifting or being shifted from occupation to occupation--sometimes to their detriment and at other times to their advantage; that this shifting is the result of economic factors and not racial proscription; that the substitution of white workers for Negro workers is compensated for in part, if not in whole, by the measureable advance in varied vocations observable in many sections of the country; and that further progress in this direction, a necessity because of our growing number of schooled young people, can be attained through re-shaping objectives, building on the experience the race has acquired in long accustomed fields and emphasizing self-help as a means of producing an awareness of strength and potentiality.

Let me state in the outset it is fallacious to consider Negro labor as an abstract entity. The ills they suffer are only partially racial. Unemployment among them finds its parallel in unemployment among white workers and the cause in both instances may be traced to fundamental economic factors which either group, separately or together, is powerless to obviate. Negro workers are prosperous when white workers are prosperous, less so perhaps, but the trend in one case is the same always as in the other. It behooves us therefore to consider the effect upon workers of all races of certain outstanding developments of recent years which are at the base of the present difficulties Negro workers face. I shall name only two of them. First, the movement away from the farms to industrial cities; and second, the so-called mechanization of industry.

Between 1920 and 1925 the farm population declined about 2,000,000, or an average of 400,000 a year. In 1920 the total farm population was 31,614,269. On January 1, 1927, it was 27,892,000, or more than four and one-half million decrease in seven years. Between 1920 and 1925 there was a decline of about 120,000 in the number of colored farmers in the South. There was an absolute decrease of close to 80,000 in the farm tenant class. Of the 2,500,000 tenant farmers in 1925 only 636,000, or about one-fourth, were colored. Although the number of Negro tenants declined by 80,000, the total number of tenants in the South went up 10,000, showing an increase of 90,000 white farmers. A release sent out from Hampton Institute in February, 1928, reads, in part, as follows: "Georgia has lost one-third of its Negro farmers between 1920 and 1925, and is still losing them. One out of every six tillers of the soil in South Carolina has departed for parts unknown. One out of every eight in Arkansas has gone, and in Alabama one out of every ten left plow to rust."

What machinery is doing to the labor of men is common knowledge to every one. Practically every industry is producing more with less human man power. Recently 3,000 musicians lost their places in New York theatres with the advent of sound pictures. On this point Secretary James J. Davis has said: "In less than ten years the population of the United States has increased by 20,000,000. To supply the needs of this large number, it would now take 140 men for 100 men employed on the production scale of 1919. Instead we are meeting the nation's demands with fewer workers."

These two factors therefore--the lure of the city which has attracted both white and colored rural workers, and the mechanization of industry which has thrown into idleness workers of every race and nationality in the country --are responsible for the dilemma in which Negroes find themselves today; namely, the replacement of Negro workers by whites. As a consequence white men are driving trucks and express wagons in the South, repairing streets doing the scavenger work, delivering ice on their backs where formerly Negroes delivered and white men collected for deliveries, serving as waiters and bellmen in hotels and doing other tasks which were once regarded only fit for Negroes. This same practice passes beyond menial occupations to the building trades where impressive losses are felt keenly. Insurance companies and fraternal orders complain that their revenue has been curtailed because of decreased earning power of their constituents and the morale of certain sections has been adversely influenced because of it. The transformation goes on in the North as well where elevator operators, doormen, house servants, and hotel men are more often white men than colored.

For almost two years attempts have been made to trace the cause to vicious design on the part of prejudiced whites. Investigation has failed to reveal concerted effort in this direction, but it has shown the uncontrollable impulse to preserve one's self at the expense of social prestige and tradition.

That Caucasians are content to lay pavement and drive garbage carts in open view of Negroes is the result of dire necessity and not propaganda. The textile industry in North and South Carolina, the wide-spread advertisement given to industrial centers by Chambers of Commerce, the false real estate prophecies of Florida, the anxiety over the generally accepted opinion that "industry is moving South," together with the unprofitableness of farming in its present muddled form, have filled the cities with unemployed farmers. The turn toward Republicanism in the South under the banner of prosperity has awakened faith in the possibilities of the larger cities which the administration is expected to favor in return for unprecedented support. Failing to find work at the end of their journey to the cities they have forsaken pride and class and taken whatever sort of work offered.

But no one can claim that the loss has been greater than the gain. It is easy to observe deficiencies from preempted ranks, but the trickling here and there of a few Negro workers into lines that have been occupied almost wholly by white labor goes on unnoticed. In 1920 Chicago and New York could boast of having some colored workers in all but one of the principal occupations listed in the census classification. Our next census will probably show Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, St. Louis and other cities equally as prosperous. In Atlanta, Savannah and Jacksonville where much can be heard respecting the transference of jobs from colored to white, business goes on as usual on Auburn Avenue and Broad Streets. Fourth Avenue in Birmingham, Beale Street in Memphis, Wylie Avenue in Pittsburgh, St. Antoine in Detroit and Center Avenue in Cleveland are still thriving mercantile centers notwithstanding the generally accepted view that Negroes are losing place in industry. Negro salesmen and saleswomen are becoming more numerous. White firms are using them to sell goods among their race. Chain stores and some few department stores in Chicago are giving employment to saleswomen. More automobile mechanics and drivers of trucks and cars are being used today than ever, and an increasing number of men and women are entering the field of industrial chemistry.

The fact is that colored workers are entering varied vocations more rapidly than the casual observer knows. A recent tabulation compiled from reports from a number of cities shows advances made in March as follows:

Chicago reveals the most significant gains in diversified employment for Negroes. A new department store has opened with 38 colored saleswomen, 60 per cent of the working force. A garment factory installed Negro operators, and another salesman has been added to the force of a furniture store.

Other cities also report gains in skilled and semi-skilled pursuits. In Los Angeles women continue to enter the garment industry in small numbers, and a skilled operator from New York was offered the position of floor lady in a factory employing Mexican operators. A steel and machinery plant in Minneapolis has "let down the bars" to skilled Negro workers and has employed its first Negro machinist, while the manufacturers of a popular motor car have taken on three skilled men in that city. A new grocery with a Negro manager and several employers has been opened in Kansas City. Many gardeners have secured work in Springfield, Ill. The Industrial Department of the St. Louis Urban League reports that the demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers in manufacturing and the building trades reached the highest point for the year in March, constituting 11 per cent of the total demand. A famous hotel in Atlantic City installed a corps of Negro waiters when the European waiters went on strike on the eve of the Easter rush. A downtown chain drug store in Philadelphia has installed three soda fountain attendants. A Chicago candy company employed 200 girls, making its first venture in Negro help.

Many Negroes went to Detroit in March, but the Urban League of that city warns against further influx. "There are no jobs," the League reports. St. Louis, however, reports employment on the up-grade and a definite movement of labor into the city, especially from the rural districts of neighboring states and Missouri. Philadelphia notes a falling off in arrivals and steady employment in construction work for many Negroes already there. Many Negroes have been employed in repairing streets in Des Moines, Denver and Hot Springs, Ark., and in Omaha the resumption of street railway and building construction has improved employment possibilities. The unemployment situation is reported as acute in Richmond, Virginia, with Negroes leaving the city in search of work.

Employment in the foundries of Chicago showed an increase but in other fields, "increased unemployment gave employers of common laborers and day workers opportunity to offer lower wages than the regular scale." In Kansas City there is a noticeable influx of both white and colored workers.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that all is well with colored workers. Conditions are far from satisfactory. Of the 1,000,000 Negroes engaged in industry the majority are unskilled workers in steel and iron plants, lumber and turpentine mills, slaughter houses, railroad construction, and the like. Of the 1,500,000 women in gainful occupations, all but 80,000 of them were in agriculture, domestic and personal service, dressmaking, tobacco factories and teaching. No other classification had as many as 10,000. Detroit boasts of 15,000 workers in the Ford plant alone, but in the numerous other cities in which the Ford Company makes or assembles cars, Negroes are employed as janitors, truckers and porters. For the present the automobile factories, chain stores, textile mills, box factories and rubber plants new to the South are doing likewise. While it is possible to find in Ohio iron factories and steel plants employing as high as 50 and 60 per cent colored workers, they are for the most part confined to laborious and unskilled tasks.

Moreover there has been no real advance in the attitude of organized labor toward colored workers. I can discover no change in practice during the past fifteen years, save the partial victory of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. As desirable as Negro membership would be to both white and colored workers, and as persistently as some have fought for it, sentiment in labor circles is still set against Negro participation. The radical wing of the labor movement is bidding for support and is probably adding some Negro workers to its ranks. But it is safe to say that unpleasant experiences lately between Negroes and the labor movement have outnumbered the pleasant ones. Unionism breaks down between black and white when it would give advantage to either side in times like these. The conquering influence of self-preservation overrides doctrine and ritual. Hence, Negro union building tradesmen, applying for work at a union employment office, may work when white tradesmen have been supplied and not until then.

The rank and file are concerned about their jobs. They are aware of a fierce struggle between themselves and their white fellow workers. They are not always sure of its origin or purpose; they may think there is concerted propaganda to take their jobs away from them, but they are agreed that the situation is real and their thoughts and conversations center around it. In all the other contests the Negro has had he has fought for gains. Today he is fighting against losses. Even in the combats against housing segregation laws he was in reality not fighting against giving up property but to acquire new possessions in territory that the race had not before occupied. Heretofore his employment problem has been chiefly one of advancement to positions commensurate with ability. Today he is endeavoring to hold the line against advancing armies of white workers intent upon gaining and content to accept occupations which were once thought too menial for white hands. But he is not holding the lines; he is receding blindly with no objective in view from which to maneuver.

While the motivating influence behind these changes is economic rather than racial something can be done about it. The pressing need of the hour is a plan for the Negro's occupational future. This he has never had. He was brought to this country a slave and did the farming and other tasks that were assigned him for more than three hundred years. He moved North during and after the war to the number of something approximating a million to meet industrial exigencies created by the war crisis. In between these two epochal events he has made entrance into industry when there was a strike to be broken, a shortage of labor for which white men could not be found, something onerous to be done, when pay was less than that paid others, or when some other emergency made his labor expedient. And when emergencies subsided he was discharged and left to find his way as best he could.

While appeals to employers for positions on the basis of fitness should never be abandoned the present state of industrial uncertainty makes it incumbent upon the Negro that he do certain things for himself. Lacking opportunities for apprenticeship he can make effective demand upon Land Grant college and trade schools for thorough courses in mechanical arts. Our losses in building operations have been due in part to our failure to apprentice or

to follow courses of instruction in schools. In parts of the South in which the Negro once had a monopoly in the building trades no new carpenters, brick-masons, plasterers and painters are taking the places of the old men who are now passing on. Trade schools located throughout the South have been unable to supply the demand or young men have been without inclination to take the courses. The public vocational schools of our larger Northern cities are filled with white children with only an occasional colored face. Federal funds were withdrawn from a Negro school in the middle west because public sentiment opposed vocational training.

The race once acquired a reputation for cooking, barbering, catering and domestic service. Negroes were the wagon drivers, laundresses, hackmen, mechanics, tenant farmers, moulders, street pavement workers, harness makers, shoemakers and longshoremen. From the experience gained in these vocations we should have developed drayage corporations, laundry establishments, building contractors, engineers, land-owners, tool makers, manufacturers, leather dealers, and street pavement contractors. Owners as well as skilled mechanics should now be common. Here is a foundation upon which to construct a degree of skill as well as ownership that will serve to prevent exploitation.

Having demonstrated proficiency to the point where the ability of Negroes to do skilled work is no longer questioned it ought to be possible to direct efforts in definite fields until reputation is established in them. The peculiarities and traits often thought to be the possession of Negroes only could be capitalized so as to give place to large numbers of Negro workers where competition would be negligible. A program such as we have in mind would take into consideration how far the Negro could push his demand for positions on the strength of his buying or consuming power. That Chicago has been able to prove the practiability of this idea is reason to believe that it can be made to work in St. Louis, Indianapolis, New York, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Kansas City and other cities that have large Negro populations.

*Opportunity*, 7 (May, 1929): 143-45.

## 22. PRESENT TRENDS IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF NEGRO LABOR

By Charles S. Johnson

The relationship of Negro labor, considered as an identifiable unit, with general labor trends appears in bolder relief in periods of rapid business fluctuations. It is only when the *relationship* is considered that discussion of individual fortunes in industry may be removed from the universe of sorcery and mysticism. There is a justifiable concern over the apparent losses sustained by Negro workers. But there are certain observations here which deserve mention in the interest of intelligent appreciation of the problems involved. In the first place, we know, roughly, the present distribution of Negro workers in the United States, and we are aware of certain gross social and economic trends:

Work	No.	Total	Per cent of total
Farm labor (own farm)	653,217	1,850,119	35.30
Working out	421,551	2,055,278	20.51
Dairy farmers, farmers and stock raisers	925,192	6,201,261	14.90
Dairy farms, farm and farm labor	1,192,504	4,041,627	29.50
Farmers (gen. farms)	924,319	6,004,580	15.37
Fishermen and oystermen	5,765	52,836	10.91
Lumber men (2 years)	48,813	385,088	12.67
Coal mine operatives	54,597	733,936	7.43
Carpenters	32,243	887,379	3.85
Laborers			
Lumber & furniture industries	106,276	320,613	33.14

Laborers	No.	Total	Per cent of total
Iron and steel industries	105,641	720,613	14.47
Cotton mills	12,816	76,315	16.80
Turpentine distillers	8,708	9,731	89.48
Ship and boat building	17,149	69,196	24.78
Machinists, millwrights & toolmakers	10,286	894,662	1.15
Cigar and tobacco	19,849	145,222	13.66
Slaughtering and packing	7,554	49,991	15.11
Longshoremen	27,337	85,928	31.81
Chauffeurs	38,573	285,045	13.53
Porters (except in stores)	59,431	88,168	67.40
Servants	481,590	1,270,946	37.87
Cooks	202,435	398,475	50.80

The first intelligent concentration of interest should be upon what is happening in those industries which have been, in the past, a refuge for Negro workers:

- (a) Agriculture has accounted for 35 per cent of the Negro workers, and the concentration has been in cotton. Since 1923 there has been a serious per capita decline in crop production and this has had the double effect of limiting returns for agricultural workers and forcing migration from the country to the cities and industrial centers.
- (b) Bituminous coal mining has absorbed in West Virginia, Alabama, Tennessee, Illinois and some parts of Pennsylvania, thousands of Negroes. The industry is seriously upset by over-production, excess of miners, and this in the face of a curtailed use of coal. One instance will suffice. Increased economics in the use of coal in power production in public utilities plants have resulted in a decrease of 43 per cent in consumption.
- (c) The lumber industry has been slow in recovering from the war slump and for several years has actually declined.
- (d) Iron and steel work in which Negroes have found employment readily has declined consistently since 1923.
- (e) Building construction has been noticeably unsteady and although highway construction has increased it has scarcely served to compensate for losses.

These are fields in which Negroes have found largest employment. But some other factors are to be likewise noted: The fields which have not been open on a large scale to Negroes have also experienced a slump, or are destined for it. Among these are the textile industry, and food products. The petroleum industry which alone was expanding at a rapid rate, as a result of the opening of new wells, has come under the observation of President Hoover and his zeal for conserving these natural resources. A result is restriction on output. All of these industries in their suspended activity have thrown labor upon the market. Add to these factors the rapid introduction of labor saving devices during the past 10 years, and as one economist has pointed out, the rearrangement in plant layout, the simplified routing of materials which under the old system required common labor, and the substitution of machinery for hand labor, the problem of excess labor begins to assert itself.

There are actually fewer factory laborers than there were in 1920.

Since the war the entrance of women in increasing numbers to industry has brought new complications, not because they have no business there, but because their usefulness in untried lines has been proved to the displacement of the traditional male. A paradox is observed at this point in the two observable phenomena which can be measured: high wages appear along with increasing unemployment, and this is a manifest contradiction of the law of supply and demand. The speculation is that there is some absorption in the new industries.

There are as yet no means of determining with accuracy the extent of this absorption, or whether, really, instead of absorption there is a widening fringe of unemployment. William A. Berridge, economist of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has made certain estimates which prove valuable here.

Using 1923 as a base year he estimates the unemployment for that year at 1,000,000, the increase in supply of employables through population growth at 3,000,000, the number of farm workers moving to town at 1,000,000, the decline in employment at 1,200,000 as against possible new employment for 2,100,000, leaving a net unemployment of about 4,000,000. Assuming, then, that the Negro workers are affected by these same forces in the same degree, there would be expected a displacement of at least 400,000 or 300,000 more than were unemployed in 1923. It will be remembered that our picture of Negro industrial participation was set in 1923. The proportion of workers to the population is higher among Negroes than for any other class and this would contribute to the seriousness of these purely non-racial forces affecting the Negro workers. Moreover Berridge's estimates do not take into account immigration. Negro labor is more seriously affected by this than other classes because they, like the immigrants, represent simple new recruits to industry and are in harshest competition. We think of immigration, however, in terms of the quota restrictions which do not include the heavy immigration of common labor from Mexico which has reached nearly a half million during the past ten years.

The causes behind the displacement of Negro workers are not far to seek. Where their old traditional positions have not been reduced in man power their numerical increases in industry have been halted by the pressure of excess white labor from other fields: from rural sections and from normal population expansion, willing to accept any grade of work and almost any pay. There has been much discussion of certain insidious and concerted forces at work to oust Negroes from jobs and there may be such. The only comment that it seems safe to make on this is that the insidious forces are not necessary so long as the economic ones are in action.

The one outstanding speculation at present that is as vital to labor in general as to Negro labor is to what extent this known excess created by reduced man power is being absorbed in new lines. Some of these general new lines are the partial by-products of the automobile industry, such as garages, service stations, the radio industry, road construction, moving pictures, etc. It appears that despite the observed Negro losses and a certain amount of unemployment there are few bread lines and such emergencies as reflect acuteness. What then are the Negroes doing, if anything? As the most convenient though admittedly limited test of this, I have examined the industrial records of two hundred Negro families representing about 1,000 persons in Nashville, Tennessee, a city with a Negro population which is over 30 per cent of the total. The data cover the period from January, 1928, to the present. Of the 200 there were 190 male heads of families and chief bread winners selected by the random salary method of every tenth family; less than 8 per cent were involuntarily unemployed, and there were noted 53 persons, or 27.3 per cent of the group, in occupations that might be described as "new" to Negroes.

There were 11 truck drivers, 4 contracting carpenters, 4 grain weighers and workers, 3 concrete finishers for road work, 2 garage workers, 2 bootleggers, and a string of such other occupations as mortar mixer, concrete mixer, automobile mechanic, gas pipe layer, car washers, floor waxer, telephone lineman, ice and coal dealers, acid testers, hosiery mill packer, blue print operators, junkman, linotype setter, insurance agent, machinist's helper, boiler maker's helper, chiroprapist, embalmer, and sales manager.

The avenues for expansion, it would appear, have been distributed inconspicuously among many lines. We have been accustomed to think of Negro accessions in the mass. As with labor in general the "service" occupations associated with the automobile have provided work for Negroes, although of an unskilled character for the most part, as car washers, garage attendants, greasers, chauffeurs, truck drivers and mechanics. The road work has absorbed some as laborers and concrete workers. Negro business itself has made some though minor contributions. The number of insurance salesman and office workers has increased. In the elevation of the entire group through special training a small portion of the would-be excess has been removed through the schools to the professions of teaching and medicine.

Reverting once more to the Nashville figures, the duration of employment in the same establishment was taken as a rough test of the rapidity of displacement of Negroes from old strongholds: Of the 130 male heads of families employed where industrial records could be secured in full, 19 or 14 per cent had been on their jobs less than one year 33 or 25 per cent between 1 and 5 years, 29 or 22 per cent between 5 and 10 years, 16 or 12 per cent between 10 and 15 years, and 34 or 26 per cent over 15 years.

If we may take so small a sampling as a guide, it is evident that despite the coming of white men into the common labor jobs of public service, in the textile factories and occasionally into the hotels, many of the old strongholds remain firm.

*Opportunity*, 7 (May, 1929): 146-48.

### 23. THE NEGRO IN THE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH

By Broadus Mitchell<sup>11</sup>

It is plain that the story of the Negro in degradation and progress is mainly to be written in terms of economic forces. We have been too much in the habit of talking about the Negro in terms of his moral, racial, psychological characteristics and too little inclined to look at him in his economic aspects.

In picturing the possible future of the Negro in the industrial South, it is not possible to judge very much from the past performance. Statistics do not shed much light on the question. The Negro people and the South, in which the great bulk of them live, are passing through a transition stage. We need to think and speak in terms of dynamics rather than of statistics. If we try to particularize too much we are likely to fail to see the forest for the leaves.

The great fact about the South is that for a long time it was poor and now it is becoming rich. The old South up to the period of about 1880 showed riches only to the casual eye. About this wealth and elegance a great deal of romance has clustered; but the moonlight and magnolias were for a small minority. The whole economic system rested on the work of black slaves and of poor whites so excluded from economic participation that they were equally bondmen. There was little diversity of employments or inventiveness. There was simply stagnating routine. This was the main reason for the South's inability to recover quickly from the effects of the Civil War. The economic system had no resiliency. An agricultural society had been laid flat, and there was conspicuous lack of industrial or commercial skill to help pick it up.

The almost universal poverty in the old South made for neglect and mistreatment of the Negro. A people economically circumscribed are apt to be pious, self-righteous, suspicious, selfish. The upper class of whites might be paternalistic, but were rarely generous. They took no chances with their social or economic order. They conceived that their own safety depended upon the definite, permanent subordination of the Negro, and out of this came racial prejudice, to give it its mildest name; but when the Reconstruction period was over, the South turned a new leaf. Important leaders realized that the old South had made a mistake in pursuing agriculture with staple crops exclusively. They preached the doctrine that the South must turn to manufacture if she hoped to regain her place in the life of the nation.

The days of industrial advocacy was the most hopeful one in the life of all the southern people--white and black alike. Cotton factories were built in large numbers, and the poor whites were rescued from penury and isolation by being brought into the mills as operatives. In the fifty years since 1880, through favorable natural resources and an abundant cheap labor supply, the South has forged ahead until she is now the industrial focus of the United States. The most conspicuous movement in American industry today is that of northern textile manufacturers to southern localities. It is a migration almost unparalleled in the history of manufactures.

All of this has meant that the South has progressed from a deficit basis to a basis of relative economic plenty and that plenty will probably grow to economic surplus. An economic system which was cramped and atrophied is now receiving new blood and takes on the aspects of vitality and rapid growth. In all of this the Negro finds his first real economic hope. There is release from agriculture ridden by a vicious credit system, with the prospect of an independent life in urban communities.

It is still commonly said that the Negro is poorly adapted to industrial employment--that he has been bred up to husbandry and cannot fit into an

industrial tempo. He is said to be shiftless, unskillful, unreliable, thriftless. It is important to remember that at the outset of industrial growth in the South, all of these things and many more were alleged of the poor whites. Few darker pictures have ever been painted of any population than were used to describe the poor whites of the southern tenant farm and mountain holding. The poor whites were declared to be hardly above the status of the settled Indian--ignorant, dirty, immoral, vicious, and above all, lazy. However, when they were brought into the factories they rapidly proved themselves to be excellent industrial workers--adaptable, capable, quick to pick up a skill which had been thoroughly alien to their old employments or many generations.

With respect to the posture of the Negro in the South today, it must be remembered that social content is closely pointed with economic inferiority. When the Negro becomes a patent economic asset, much of our racial prejudice against him will melt away. It has been so with the poor whites--a class which was once despised has now come to be cherished. The labor of the poor whites is in brisk demand; and so we begin to attend to their education and their political opinions. Mill villages have become nurseries of their social improvement. We shall be more mindful of the Negro's rights and potentialities when it is more obvious that he has something which the white South requires.

The new period of economic diversification and approaching plenty in the South may put us in mind to exploit the resources offered by nine million Negroes. We shall not be so anxious to protect a precarious white supremacy, but will be moved by the desire for greater riches to allow latitude and betterment to the Negroes. Most of our crimes against the Negro proceeded from the economic insufficiency. Poverty makes sinners of us all. I have often thought that the verse in the New Testament about it being harder for a rich man to get into heaven than for a camel to get through the eye of a needle ought to be turned around; the difficulty is going to be for a poor man to get into heaven because his limitations breed in him hatreds and shortsightedness.

The old plantation system restricted and confined the Negro; the new industrial system puts him in motion. I do not mean to imply, of course, that there were not many people in the old South and in the South since the Civil War who have been earnestly solicitous for the advancement of the Negro. There have been devoted pioneers in education, religion and race relationships; but all their prayers and anxieties have been of less effect in bettering the condition of the Negro than the purely objective developments such as the World War and the restriction upon immigration which have opened jobs for the Negro, North and South. It shows again that we cannot get away from the overwhelming importance of economic forces in the life of the Negro. It has been much the same with our whole rural population. I was brought up on this, that and the other program for enriching country life. Individuals strained their inventiveness and their pocketbooks, societies were formed, legislatures were besought, farm demonstration agents and home economics teachers were dispatched into rural districts to help render farm life less destitute and lonesome.

I suppose all this had some result, but it was far less than that which fell out from the invention of the internal combustion engine. The cheap automobile has given the farm population social contacts, earning power and a degree of assimilation to the life of the whole community of which no one dreamed before. If well-wishers of the farm people of the South had been wise, instead of begging for goodness, education and a cooperative spirit they would have prayed: O God send us a carburetor and a high compression cylinder."

You have all seen movies in which the title of the picture is decorated with a scene intended to express the spirit of the whole picture. Thus, if it turns about the World War, the background will be composed of a shadowy cannon. If we could take a picture of Southern life today, I believe we would have chosen for our frontispiece an outline of a machine in giant proportions. The machine is destined to be the greatest modifying influence upon the life of the Negro in the South. Everybody knows it is a good thing to get Negroes into industry. The attempt at fitting them for individual penetration has been valiant but unsuccessful. I went the other day to visit a class of Negro boys in shoemaking in an industrial training school. The instructor was showing them how to fasten a hog bristle to the end of a waxed thread to make a sharp point for sewing on the soles. The teacher explained to the boys that this was a bristle of a special Russian hog which was particularly stiff. After a long time the class was still practicing in attaching these bristles. So far as I know, shoes are not made by hand any more, and they are repaired also by machinery. This class and many others like it represent wasted effort. The



preparation of the Negro artisan is not racially or socially very important, I think. This is the day of mass movements with great economic forces pushing men here and there into this and that employment willy-nilly. The individual does not have to think--the machine is much cleverer than he is and does his thinking for him.

The supply of poor whites in the South available for the new industrial system is getting low. There is evidence of this in the recent series of strikes in textile communities of Tennessee and the Carolinas. It is my guess that before long industrial employment of Negroes in the South will not be confined to cotton-seed oil mills, tobacco factories and fertilizer works, but will be prominent in many of the higher grades of fabrication, as, for example, in the textile factories. Tremendous danger lurks in this potential recourse to Negro industrial workers. The poor whites of the South have been badly exploited in manufactures, and are only now beginning to emerge from long hours and low wages. Particularly because of the influx of northern industry, it may be that resort to Negroes for factory workers will mean a new submergence of the South's industrial labor. Perhaps the competition of Negroes will tend to throw the poor whites back into their old disabilities under which they suffered because of the competition of slave labor before the Civil War.

The constantly greater tendency to machines which economize labor may make the introduction of Negroes more gradual than it would otherwise be, and thus ease the process. The greatest hope for solution of this problem lies, however, in the growing diversification of Southern industry. The cotton manufacture has been held the white man's employment because there was almost no other industry. Every new industrial opportunity that opens means that greater latitude will be allowed to the Negro. The Negro's entrance into industry will be through the door of the rougher operations first and he will probably fall heir to industries presenting bad conditions previously deserted by white workers. The whites in the South have been through an industrial tutelage which has been long and still is arduous, but with all its drawbacks it has meant salvation, and I think we may predict the same for large numbers in our Negro population.

*Opportunity*, 7 (May, 1929): 149-50.

#### 24. INDUSTRIAL AND LABOR CONDITIONS

##### The Negro in Industry and Business

In its issue for May, 1929, *Opportunity*, the organ of the National Urban League, devotes much of its space to papers and addresses given at the annual conference of the league held at Louisville, Ky., April 9-12, 1929. To a large extent, the discussions were concerned with the effects of two comparatively recent developments--the movement of colored workers from the farm to the city and the changes in their occupations consequent both on this and on the increasing competition with white workers. In moving from the country to the town and the city the negro, it was pointed out, is merely following the migration of the whites. For years past the white workers of the rural South have been going from the country to the mill village and thence onward to the city, and this movement has been accelerated lately by modern methods of cultivation which give the large owner an advantage over the small farmer. The negro, whether tenant farmer or hand, is moving from the country as the diversification of crops and the introduction of large-scale methods of cultivation make it harder for him to keep his foothold. But as he goes into the southern cities he finds a competition there which formerly he did not meet. Certain kinds of work were traditionally his; white men lost caste by taking them. But city industries are largely machine industries, and the growing productivity of the machine has decreased relatively the demand for men. In the growing struggle for employment, old traditions are thrown into the discard, and the negro finds himself meeting white competition for jobs long regarded as his by prescriptive right.

White men are driving trucks and express wagons in the South, repairing

streets, doing the scavenger work, delivering ice on their backs where formerly negroes delivered and white men collected for deliveries, serving as waiters and bellmen in hotels, and doing other tasks which were once regarded only fit for negroes.

Naturally, this process makes it more difficult for a negro to find employment, but his difficulty is not due to any plot against negro welfare, intentionally fostered by prejudiced whites; it is simply a natural result of changing economic conditions. Moreover, it is coincident with the penetration of negroes into lines in which they were not formerly employed, according to Mr. T. Arnold Hill, industrial director of the league, who lists a few of the occupations in which they are making gains:

Negro salesmen and saleswomen are becoming more numerous. White firms are using them to sell goods among their race. Chain stores and some few department stores in Chicago are giving employment to saleswomen. More automobile mechanics and drivers of trucks and cars are being used today than ever, and an increasing number of men and women are entering the field of industrial chemistry.

Speaking along the same general lines, Charles S. Johnson gave the results of a study he had made to find out what the negroes in the cities are actually doing. Taking 200 families, representing about 1,000 persons, in Nashville, Tenn., a city in which the negro population forms about 30 per cent of the total, he had inquired into their occupations. There were 190 male heads of families and chief breadwinners; less than 8 per cent were involuntarily unemployed; and there were 53 persons, or 27.3 per cent of the total, in occupations that might be described as new for negroes.

There were 11 truck drivers, 4 contracting carpenters, 4 grain weighers and workers, 3 concrete finishers for road work, 2 garage workers, 2 bootleggers, and a string of such other occupations as mortar mixer, concrete mixer, automobile mechanic, gas-pipe layer, car washers, floor waxer, telephone lineman, ice and coal dealers, acid testers, hosiery mill packer, blue-print operators, junkman, linotype setter, insurance agent, machinist's helper, boiler maker's helper, chiroprapist, embalmer and sales manager.

Prof. Broadus Mitchell, of Johns Hopkins University, stressed the fact that social principles are not immutable, and that they are constantly being altered by economic forces. It is often claimed that the negro is unfit for industrial employment, that he is shiftless, unskillful, and unreliable, and that while he is a good agricultural worker he cannot fit into the tempo of modern industry. All these things were also said of the poor whites when they were first brought into industry.

Few darker pictures have ever been painted of any population than were used to describe the poor whites of the southern tenant farm and mountain holding. The poor whites were declared to be hardly above the status of the settled Indian--ignorant, dirty, immoral, vicious, and above all, lazy.

Just as the poor white, however, proved excellent industrial material when once adapted to such employment, so will the negro. The machine age is changing the social life of the South, the supply of poor whites available for the new industrial system is getting low, and the negro is the natural resource for the employer who must have more labor. "The machine is destined to be the greatest modifying influence upon the life of the negro in the South." There is a real danger, however, that the industrial use of the negro may go through the same stages as the industrial use of the poor whites--exploitation, long hours, poor wages, and a general submergence of the South's industrial labor.

The greatest hope for the solution of this problem lies, however, in the growing diversification of southern industry. The cotton manufacture has been held the white man's employment because there was almost no other industry. Every new industrial opportunity that opens means that greater latitude will be allowed to the negro. The negro's entrance into industry will be through the door of the rougher operations first and he will probably fall heir to industries presenting bad conditions previously deserted by white workers. The

whites in the South have been through an industrial tutelage which has been long and still is arduous, but with all its drawbacks it has meant salvation, and I think we may predict the same for large numbers in our negro population.

### The Negro in Business<sup>12</sup>

A different aspect of the question of negro progress is presented by a study made in 1928 by the National Negro Business League, with the general purpose of finding out what the negro is doing in business, how he is doing it, and along what lines increased effort can be most fruitfully applied. The study was made in 33 cities, mostly in the West and South, with an aggregate population of 5,066,936, of whom 920,283 were colored. It included a total of 2,817 enterprises of colored business men, 60 being financial institutions, such as banks, insurance companies, building and loan associations, and the like, while 2,757 included representatives of most forms of business activity, ranging from grocery stores to undertaking establishments, and from barber shops to building and excavating contractors. Grocery stores formed the largest group, numbering 526, barber shops came next with 380, restaurants and tailoring establishments, with 309 and 312, respectively, were nearly on a par, drug stores numbered 187, auto repair and service stations 169, undertaking establishments 154, and from these the numbers decreased to 10 real estate concerns and 5 fruit and vegetable shops. Most of these are small-scale businesses, the average number of employees per enterprise running from a trifle over 2 in the flower shops and miscellaneous stores to 20.5 for the building and excavating firms. The financial enterprises differed sharply from the others in this respect, having a total personnel of 5,000 or an average of 84.8 employees per business; this is largely due to the inclusion of the field force, who number 3,916, and form 77 per cent of the total.

Excluding the financial enterprises, the great majority of the businesses were individually owned, 2,191, or 79.4 per cent, coming under this classification; 334, or 12.1 per cent, were partnerships, and 109, or 3.9 per cent, were corporations, while as to the remainder the facts were not reported. A study of methods of bookkeeping showed that of 2,466 reporting on this item, 1,639, or 66.5 per cent, used single entry; 371, or 15 per cent, used double entry; 35 used manifolding systems; and 421, or 17 per cent, kept no records. The majority purchased their supplies from local wholesalers, but a considerable group bought from the open market--i.e., from dealers outside of the immediate community in which the buyer is located--frequently on bids. Of the total group of 2,757, 1,703, or 62 per cent, advertised their business, while 830, or 30 per cent, reported that they did not advertise, and the remainder made no report on the subject. Negro newspapers were naturally the favorite advertising medium, being used by 1,080, or 63 per cent, of those who advertised at all, but white newspapers, negro and white magazines, and direct mail methods were also used. A study of business longevity showed that 883, or nearly one-third of the group, had been in existence for 10 years or longer. A report upon the volume of business done showed that a trifle over one-sixth (466) had an annual volume of from \$15,000 upward as, follows:

	Number
\$15,000 and under \$25,000	218
\$25,000 and under \$50,000	179
\$50,000 and under \$100,000	54
\$100,000 and under \$500,000	15
Total	466

The report stresses the fact that while, in the main, the businesses studied were small enterprises, with the drawbacks and deficiencies natural to their size, the group not only contained some large and important undertakings but also showed a creditable number making use of modern methods of buying, advertising, and conducting their affairs. But for the small retail stores, which form so large a proportion of the group studied, present conditions call for some changes if modern competition is to be successfully met, and two are cited as of special importance:

First, the grouping of retailers into chains or buying associations in order to effect economies in managerial costs and to obtain the advantages of larger-scale buying.

Second, the introduction of more careful methods of carrying on the business so as to reduce waste and needless cost.

Another point brought out by the survey is that the field of negro advertising is not being adequately worked.

It is believed and hoped that the findings of this survey will open up to national advertisers the possibilities of developing the negro field. The 12,000,000 negroes in America represent a compact, race-conscious group which is, year after year, becoming better educated and more and more economically independent. These factors of progress comprise the elements of interest for advertisers who will be seeking to develop new outlets for their business.

It will be noticed that in both industry and business the negroes are not despondent as to their position. In industry, the advance of the machine and the change from country to city conditions are causing a transition period in which they are here losing, there gaining ground, but in which, on the whole, their leaders believe they are making progress. In business they are taking stock of the situation, with a view to finding where and why they are most successful, and how they can best strengthen their position. Five years hence they propose to repeat this survey, using the data of the present study for comparative purposes. Meanwhile, they recognize that in both fields they are hampered by the traditional view of what they are capable of doing, by their own lack of experience in the new fields they are entering, in some places by a certain amount of racial prejudice, and everywhere by an increasingly keen competition from white workers as machine productivity tends to reduce the need for man power. So, in both business and industry, they are striving to organize their own forces to improve the present situation, to open up new opportunities for training and experience, and to use their own economic power as a means for helping themselves to better conditions.

*Monthly Labor Review*, 29 (July, 1929): 66-69.

## THE THIRTIES

### 25. THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF THE NEGRO

By A. Philip Randolph<sup>13</sup>

We are in the grip of an intensive and extensive economic crisis. It is severe. It is stubborn. It is baffling. It involves the business man, the worker, the doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, the preacher and the farmer, the buyer, the seller, the tenant, the landlord--all.

It is not local. It is not national. It is not racial. It is not creed-al. It is world-wide in scope. Different from and worse than a scourge or pestilence such as the Black Death of the Middle Ages in Europe or an earthquake anywhere, it is a blight on all lands and afflicts all peoples.<sup>14</sup>

In its devastating path, stalk the menacing and unsightly figures of hunger and want, crime and corruption, crashes and conflicts of labor and capital, increased bankruptcies, mergers, mob violence, lynching, racketeers, bribery, blackmail, political and intellectual hijacking, moral malaise, misery and suffering of men and women, aged and children.

Unemployment, the most serious aspect of this crisis is guessed at, in the absence of an index gauge in the United States of America, to range from 3 to 8 millions. In England where more accurate figures obtain, the jobless are estimated at some 2,500,000; in Germany about, 3,000,000; in Italy 800,000; in Japan 500,000; and now even France of a small estate, peasant class population, hitherto relatively free from unemployment is swinging into the vicious cycle.

Estimated bank failings, another aspect of the crisis, for 1930 up to December are 981 with deposits of \$312,000,000; fifty-one closing their doors in the South in one day, according to the Literary Digest of December 27th, 1930. The record year for bank suspensions was 1926 with 956 involving \$270,000,000 in deposits. Nineteen thirty, when the smoke clears, is expected to record 1000 failures with well-nigh three-quarters of a billion deposits. The collapse of the Bank of United States in December with some \$200,000,000 deposits and 400,000 depositors with 59 branches, together with the Chelsea Exchange Bank with 7 branches in New York, involving \$23,000,000 in deposits, will quite considerably swell the sum. In this financial debacle, Negro banks and their general business have been hit hard. Probably the strongest bank ever organized among Negroes, the Binga State Bank of Chicago and the First Standard Savings, the American Mutual Savings of Louisville and the Peoples Savings Banks in Nashville, closed their doors.<sup>15</sup>

In the last decade, according to the Comptroller of Currency, 5640 banks failed with deposits of \$1,721,000,000. And the mortality among wholesale and retail merchants, foreclosures on homes and farms, is frightful and staggering. Commercial failures exclusive of banks numbered 26,335 with total liabilities of \$668,283,842. There is no way of estimating its tremendous extent, and the social and economic losses entailed.

Suppose we say that an average of 5 millions of workers have been unemployed during the year 1930 which is probably more nearly right than wrong and that the average wage-salary loss is \$3.00 per worker per day, the total wage-salary income loss is five billion four hundred million dollars.

Now, it is estimated that the Negro working class population, as of the U.S. Census of 1920, represents 11.6 per cent of the general working class population of the country. Thus, considering the fact that the Negro is regarded as the marginal worker, "first fired and last hired," there are surely not less than 500,000 unemployed. Says the National Urban League, in a recent survey of unemployment in 25 industrial centers among Negroes, by T. Arnold Hill and Ira De A. Reid: "Unemployment statistics of twenty-five cities for the period January 1st to September 30th, 1930, show a decrease of 34.5 per cent in number of available jobs for Negroes and an increase of 39.9 per cent in number of applicants over same period for 1929. But the average wage-salary income per Negro worker is not as high as the general average for the country. Let us say that it is roughly \$2.00 per day per worker, this would represent a minimum wage-salary income loss for the race for 1930 of some 360 million dollars or about a million dollars a day.

This economic loss reflects itself in increased physical deterioration, sickness, moral degeneration, family difficulties, reduced patronage of doctors and non-payment of bills, less and poorer food and clothing, lapses of insurance policies, longer bread lines and the giving of the "dole."

According to the survey of the National Urban League: "In almost every city Negroes constitute a larger part of the beneficiaries of charitable agencies than they do of the population. This is because they receive a smaller share of the work."

Such are the plight and ills of the Negro.

What of the remedy? This may be more obvious after we seek the causes that appear to be many and varied. It is quite possible, too, that there is no absolute cure for unemployment under the present competitive economic system. But some fundamental remedies are applicable when the behavior of phenomena making for unemployment is adequately known.

As to the nature of the types of unemployment, there are residual, seasonal, cyclical, and technological.

Residual unemployment, like the poor, is always with us. The Committee on Elimination of Waste in Industry of the Federated Engineering Societies in its report, "Waste in Industry," published in 1921, states: In the best years, even the phenomenal years of 1917 and 1918 at the climax of wartime industrial activities, when plants were working to capacity and when unemployment reached its lowest point in twenty years, there was a margin of unemployment amounting to more than a million men. This margin is fairly permanent; seemingly one or more wage earners out of every forty are always out of work." And it is difficult to visualize the non-existence of some lag of unemployment, though short, less vexatious and burdensome, to be sure, even under a socialized and more highly coordinated economy.

## Seasonal Unemployment

Seasonal unemployment has long since beset the heels of the worker. It is probably putting it conservatively to say that practically every industry is in a measure seasonal. Hoover engineers showed that workers in the building trades were employed on the average but 63 per cent of the year. Investigation discloses that factories in the men's clothing industry are running on the average of about 69 per cent of the possible working time, according to Dr. Harry W. Laidler, Director of the League for Industrial Democracy. Here again, seasonal unemployment seems to be indigenous and chronic to our Manchester *laissez faire* economy.

But probably the type of unemployment which occasions greatest fear and hardship among the workers is cyclical in its character. In the last 120 years in America about fifteen periods of industrial depression and prosperity, appearing with a sort of rhythmic regularity, have given us pause.

## Technological Unemployment

But cyclical unemployment is not the most baffling aspect of the depression, for its average duration, says the Cambridge Associates of Boston, is slightly over 18 months. Whereas, there is no apparent end to technological unemployment, that is, unemployment created by the machine, labor-saving devices, efficiency methods and industrial and commercial consolidations.

Note this picture. The automatic elevator in apartments and office buildings has eliminated men. "Seven men now do the work which formerly required 60 to perform in casting pig iron; 2 men do the work which formerly required 128 to perform in loading pig iron! One man replaces 42 in operating open-hearth furnaces. A brick-making machine in Chicago makes 40,000 bricks in one hour. It formerly took one 8 hours to make 450. In New York from 1914 to 1925 the number of workers in the paper box industry decreased 32 per cent while the output per wage earner increased 121 per cent."

It is estimated that some 15,000 or 25,000 extras in the motion industry are unfavorably affected by the "talkies" and that "canned" music in the movie theatres has destroyed the skill and rendered jobless thousands of musicians. According to the Federal Reserve Board, the output per man in manufacturing is 45 per cent greater in 1929 than in 1919, although there was a decrease in workers in manufacturing of 10 per cent, even before the depression of 1929. In mining, the output per person increased from 40 to 45 per cent, but the numbers employed dropped approximately 7 per cent. In the last decade, the efficiency of the railroad workers measured in ton-miles greatly increased, and rail employees lost jobs to the extent of 300,000 more or less. As a result of tractors, corn huskers, binders in the wheat fields and other machinery the output per farm worker increased 25 per cent, and, according to the Department of Agriculture, about 3,800,000 left the farms for the cities, white and colored. In mining, railroading, manufacturing and farming, workers decreased in the last 10 years by about 2,800,000, observes Prof. S. H. Schlichter of Cornell.

Former Secretary of Labor James J. Davis points out "that a puddler and one helper, in the old days could turn out from 2,500 to 3,000 pounds of puddled iron a day. With a machine and the new process, an engineer has produced 2,400 tons in ten hours. The corn husker does the work of 5 men. Binders in the wheat fields in Kansas with 10,000 men will do what 30,000 men formerly did. One hundred men in the Bureau of Labor Statistics with the adding machine can do the work of 500 brain workers. There is a machine in the Census Bureau that with 1,000 employees does the work of 10,000." Wherever you turn," he continued, "drills, machinery, conveyors, processes and chemicals are doing the work--Track-layers and the railroad section hands find rails laid by mechanical devices, riveted by acetylene welders, and the dirt tramped around the ties with mechanical trammers. Longshoremen find ships loaded by mechanical devices and the freight laid upon conveyors that carry it from the ship's hold into the storage warehouse on the dock. The hod carrier finds the brick and mortar dumped into boxes automatically pulled by a chain into an elevator and scooted up to the top of the building without his assistance. The concrete mixer finds the mix poured into a great cylinder which is a part of an automobile truck and is mixed by the same power that propels the car from the material yard to the place where the concrete is to be used."

This is but a glimpse into the amazing technological revolution going on around us. It touches the Negro worker, skilled and unskilled, as farm laborers, longshoremen, hod carrier, rail employee, etc. And whether Negro workers are employed in an industry directly affected by technological changes or not, they are hit indirectly, since when the skill of a group of white workers is liquidated by an invention, they fall into the category of unskilled workers or competitors of Negro workers, unless, they (the white workers) are vocationally restrained, which is not yet the rule. Already in the South, the influence of the mechanization of the farms and the march of mass production are creating a surplus of white workers who are becoming absorbed easily into menial forms of work formerly considered "Negro jobs," such as teamsters, ice delivery men, scavengers, street cleaners, ashcart drivers, road making, etc.

Domestic work, too, is rapidly becoming mechanized, thereby requiring less and less personal servants. Besides, there is going on a process of hotelization and apartmentalization which tend to make for the centralization of personal service work where it is being subjected to the process of mass production, which, in turn, will result in more work done with less workers. While this may not be an immediate exigency, it is a rather certain future contingency, according to our present industrial trends.

#### Some Remedies

The machine is a challenge to the nation, not only to black and white workers, and this challenge cannot be met by charity, unemployment surveys and temporary jobs, however, important they may be for the *nonce*. No amount of charity is a remedy. Its a palliative. To feed the hungry and shelter the homeless is necessary but this should not obscure the fundamental program.

The fact is the workers have worked themselves out of work and will repeat the process in the next five or six years. They have produced more goods and services than they can buy back with the wages they receive. The depression is not so much the result of over production as of under consumption. The people have a physical desire for goods they have no economic power to command.

#### High Wages

Obviously if the wage earners, the large majority of the population, cannot buy back what they produce which results in piling up large inventories, one remedy will consist in increasing the purchasing power by raising the wage scale. A word about this problem. In the decade from 1919 to 1929, the numbers of workers engaged in manufacturing decreased 449,775. Wages paid in 1929 showed an increase of \$809,229,749 over 1919. Whereas the increase in the total value added by manufacture was \$6,286,762,484. Put in another way, the employer was able to add \$7.70 to the value of his goods for every dollar he gave to his employees in increased wages. The increase in the cost of raw materials in 1929 amounted to only \$124,928,718 above the figures for 1919. Thus the value added by manufacture increased \$5,352,604,017 more than the increase in raw materials and wages combined.

In 1914, the average wage in American manufacturing establishments was \$589, the value added by manufacture per worker was \$1,407. Five years later, in 1919, owing largely to the World War, wages had gone up to \$1,162, but the value added by manufacture had increased to \$2,756. In other words, the workers had received \$573 more for creating \$1,349 of additional value. Eight years later, 1927, the average wage was \$1,299 and value added by manufacture had gone up to \$3,303. The worker was receiving \$137 more wages than in 1919 but his production had increased \$547 in value. Finally in 1929, the average wage was \$1,318, and the value added by manufacture was \$3,636. Here we find the workers' wages had increased \$19 in two years and the value of his output had gone up \$333. Herein lies the basic cause of recurring depressions. The problem can only be solved by the most scientific industrial statesmanship and social visions.

High wages (real wages) are most significant as a remedy because wage earners are the most important and largest group of consumers in the country. Roughly, with their families, they represent 70 per cent of the population and receive an income of something more than 32 billion dollars a year or 36 per cent of the national income; with the earnings of the salaried workers, who

represent about 13 per cent of the population, the two groups, while constituting 83 per cent or more of the population, receive only 57 per cent of the nation's income. And they purchase a great deal more than 57 per cent of the nation's consumer goods. On the other hand, the bond and share-holders and property owners, though representing 17 per cent or less of the population, receive about 43 per cent of the nation's income, and most of this income is reinvested in producers' capital, which is, in turn, a source of the production of more commodities the workers cannot buy, thereby, creating huge inventories and commodity congestion or industrial paralysis.

#### Shorter Work Day and Week

But high wages alone will not solve the problem of depressions. This fact is clearly recognized by the American Federation of Labor which is fighting for a 5-day week and by the Big Four Railroad Brotherhood Unions that have inaugurated a crusade for the 6-hour day. The 6-hour day may absorb nearly a quarter of a million idle rail workers. The progress of productive machinery, too, may eventually render the 4-hour day and the 4-day week practicable. How else will the surplus workers be employed?<sup>17</sup>

#### Labor Unions

Obviously neither high wages nor the shorter work day or week will come without the struggle of those who will benefit from them. All history attests that every social, economic, political and religious reform has only been won through the utmost struggle, sacrifice and suffering. "Verily, there is no remission of sin except through blood."

Thus, labor organization is the primary and most effective factor in the solution of the problem of seasonal, cyclical and technological unemployment; for it is only through the exercise of power, attainable through the organization of wage earners is it possible increasingly to exact higher wages and shorter hours of work. Labor alone will make the necessary struggle, sacrifice and undergo the suffering to stop its own exploitation. But the workers must be organized. Out of 41 million--only 5 million are organized and benefit from fairly high wages and shorter work hours.

#### Social Legislation

But labor may be helped. Old Age Pensions are essential to those who have paid their price to society in industry in blood, sweat, tears and toil and are no longer able to keep the pace. And while the aged should be pensioned, the deadline against the men of 45 in industry should be removed.

Employment could also be provided by raising the compulsory school age and the adoption of a Federal Child Labor Law which would affect over a million child laborers who are competitors of their fathers in the labor market.

Unemployment insurance, too, like sick, accident, death and fire insurance, should be formulated and enacted as a national measure by Congress. Private charities are far too inadequate. If unemployment, like sickness and death are unavoidable, insurance against it is indispensable.

Of course, free national employment exchanges and government works, planned over a long period, will help, but usually the political red tape incidental to developing public works, prevents the works from beginning until after the depression ends.

#### Twenty-five Year Plan

Beside the above-mentioned measures is the broad field of self-help by the people. In this field may be listed consumers and producers, cooperatives and workers' credit unions, to mobilize small units of capital into large volumes, for economic strength and protection. Among Negroes as among farmers and economically weak groups, the Apian Way of private capitalism is difficult if not impossible to trod, especially, in view of the increasing concentration and centralization of financial and industrial power into fewer and fewer hands.

Through a process of interlocking directorships, about 1,000 corporations dominate American business, and at the top of these stand J. P. Morgan and Co., the Bankers Trust and Guarantee Companies, the First National, the National



City and Chase National Banks, who have under their control over \$74,000,000, 000, of corporate assets, equal to more than one-quarter of all the corporate assets of the United States. They practically dominate the business life of the United States, Central and South Americas and exercise a tremendous control in all Europe, Asia and Africa. This amazing empire of capital is more powerful than any political empire or monarchy the world has even seen.

In this regime, the individual, black or white, is helpless. Negroes can only survive modern science and industrialism through consumers' and producers' cooperatives and labor organizations and through the support of labor and social legislation and political action in sympathy with the collective ownership, control and operation of the social productive and distributive instrumentalities in our industrial society. This, however, requires scientific intelligence and a new type of character which can only come through systematic and methodical planning to eventuate through a period of a quarter of a century, much of a piece in principle, with the Russian 5-Year Plan. Much time is needed for the tragedy of it all is that there are but few, either among the leadership or fellowship, who are aware of what is happening to our modern, industrial life.

Major factors in the plan should be workers' and adult education, and a leadership of courage, education and integrity and a will to sacrifice for the economic well-being of the masses.

To the development of such a plan the "best minds" of the race should be called to form a sort of Supreme Economic Council through which such a plan might be formulated and executed. No existing Negro organization can do it. It should embrace the "best brains" in all of the Negro movements, somewhat of the nature of Kelly Miller's Sanhedrin, but smaller. Probably more nearly like the League of Nations which assembles the worlds greatest experts to grapple with world problems such as the Young Plan. No single Negro organization is now strong enough to withstand the economic stress and strain of the coming years. United, scientific, courageous, honest and sacrificial endeavor alone can save the race. Have the leaders of church, school, press, politics, social service and race movements, the will and the spirit and world vision to meet this challenge? Either we accept the challenge, unite and rise or remain as we are and go down and perish. For, forsooth the old order passeth.<sup>18</sup>

*Opportunity*, 9 (May, 1931): 145-49.

## 26. INDUSTRIAL AND LABOR CONDITIONS

### The Negro in the Industrial Depression

The industrial relations department of the National Urban League has recently issued a report embodying the results of inquiries made early in 1931 of "governors, directors of community chests, chambers of commerce, Urban League secretaries, relief agencies, employment experts, officials of insurance companies, and other persons whose contact with labor and financial conditions gives them an opportunity to answer the question propounded: 'What is the effect of unemployment among Negroes in various parts of the country?'"

The replies received were informal and do not lend themselves readily to tabulation, but several effects are distinctly shown. There is a greater proportionate amount of unemployment among Negroes than among whites; there is a tendency in some localities to substitute white for colored workers, and, occasionally, to give preference to white over colored workers in public work; there is no discrimination against the Negroes in the matter of relief; there are indications of a change in the occupational distribution of the two races, the whites taking over forms of work hitherto held as properly belonging to the colored; and there is a growing restlessness among the Negroes, who are moving from place to place in search of jobs.

## Extent of Unemployment Among Negroes

Wherever figures were given, the percentage of the unemployed among Negroes exceeded their percentage of the total population, and in some cases the disproportion was very marked. Thus, in Baltimore they formed 17 per cent of the population and 31.5 per cent of the unemployed; in Charleston, S.C., 49 per cent of the population and 70 per cent of the unemployed; in Chicago, 4 per cent of the population and 16 per cent of the unemployed; in Memphis, the corresponding percentages were 38 and 75; in Philadelphia, 7 and 25; and in Pittsburgh, 8 and 38. The caution is given that these percentages are not strictly comparable, since different factors enter into the returns from different places.

It is of particular significance that the highest figures are found in northern industrial centers, where the Negro is limited to unskilled occupations and is in truth the marginal worker. This is not to be taken, however, to mean that the disproportion does not appear also in southern communities, where the percentage of cases handled by relief agencies is also in excess of the per cent Negroes form of the total population.

A part of this unemployment is direct, being due to the closing down of industrial plants, as in Youngstown, whence comes the report that "that branch of work in the large mills which engages the greatest number of Negro laborers is practically dead, resulting in critical conditions among the Negro workers." Another part is indirect, and is due to the fact that hard times cause a falling off in the demand for services of the kind often rendered by colored workers. Thus from Danville, Va., it is reported that the general unemployment situation has been made worse by the effects of the textile strike. "Strike conditions have been felt among all classes to the extent that ordinary jobs of cleaning, washing, and general housework have been done within the families which formerly engaged Negro workers."

## White Versus Colored Workers

Instances of substituting white for colored workers are reported from a number of cities, both north and south. From one city comes the statement that janitor jobs, totaling 600 in number, formerly held by Negroes, have been vacated. "One concern laid off 12 colored porters to be replaced by white men." In another city "many instances of the replacement of Negro workers by whites have been reported, and hundreds of Negro domestic workers have been discharged and replaced by whites," while the statement that "several organizations have released Negroes and replaced them with white workers," comes in varying form again and again. Occasionally, some other nonwhite race is substituted for the colored workers. "One hotel replaced its force of 20 Negro maids, elevator boys, and cooks with Filipinos, and thereby cut its wage bill practically in half."

This substitution of workers of other races in jobs customarily held by Negroes has been chiefly in personal service occupations, the principal occupations being household employment, elevator operating, and hotel service. In a number of establishments, as in the case of hotels, white girls are employed in places formerly held by colored men.

## General Conditions

Inevitably, in view of the large amount of unemployment among them, Negroes constitute a heavy part of the burden borne by relief agencies. Presumably they help one another informally to a considerable extent, but apart from that, their churches and other social organizations have taken up energetically the work of helping the unemployed. From city after city word comes in of the work they are doing, mostly in the form of direct relief. "In each of six different sections on the South Side one or more churches are maintaining free feeding stations. Funds are being raised among Negro merchants and their employees for relief work." "Several large Negro churches are serving free meals, some of them averaging more than 100 meals a day. One church has served meals to over 2,000 Negroes and approximately 1,000 white persons. A women's club has provided a dormitory for homeless women, averaging 17 lodgers a night."

Frequent references in advices from all over the Nation indicate that free kitchens, money relief, and clothing are being provided by religious institutions

to supplement the work of social agencies. For the first time the Negro church has entered the field of practical social service on such a large scale.

Naturally, the search for work is leading to considerable shifts among the colored population, and a growing restlessness is noticed. In both Brooklyn and New York City there has been an influx of outsiders to make a bad situation worse; "and throughout the country there is more than expected population mobility, even for unemployment periods."

#### Signs of Improvement

From several quarters come reports of improved conditions since an inquiry of this kind was concluded in November, 1930. In Philadelphia there is "a slowly increasing demand for labor," one which, however, is far from sufficient to employ the job seekers. Unfortunately, "employment conditions among Negroes have not increased proportionately with those of the white group," and conditions are bad. In some of the Southern States seasonal activities have helped the situation, and in some other regions a general improvement has been visible.

The bright side of the picture is presented by improvements in several sections of the country--the packing plants in Omaha; roads and river construction near Memphis; the flour mills and lumbering industries of Seattle; a bumper cane crop and citrus yield in Florida; fertilizing plants in Augusta; the existence of public-work projects in Pittsburgh; general favorable conditions in Denver; a lowering of unemployment in Dayton--these are the principal sources of better times for Negro workers.

#### Summary

As a result of the survey, the following conclusions are presented:

That the situation has not materially improved since the issuance of our last report in November.

That measures for relief are confined almost entirely to charity.

That Negroes get more relief but fewer jobs than others from agencies established to aid the unemployed.

That Negroes continue, and unless provision is made to the contrary, will continue to contribute more than their proportionate share of the burden of relief agencies.

That the economic structure of the entire Negro race is in an alarming state of disrepair, with dire effect upon business and professional interests dependent upon the patronage of Negro wage earners.

That restlessness is evident from one end of the country to the other; for unquestionably Negroes have lost jobs to which they will not return even when normal times come again; and

That the new jobs offered Negroes in public works have not been in proportion to their need.

*Monthly Labor Review*, 32 (June, 1931): 60-62.

#### 27. TWO LETTERS

Comrades:

I am a white marine worker. Greetings to the international class struggle Negro workers!

Gee!, things are rotten here in the South--soup lines, bread lines, houses, the city jails are full. The cossacks chase the unemployed workers out to the prairies to starve. The g. d. cowards won't fight back, many are doing "dutch". Taking poison. For me I am waiting for the barricades, they can't come too quick for me. I am going up in my fifties but I'll fight the 100 percent. Comrades send us some German papers. Negro workers of Africa write to your brother workers--white and black in the South. I am sending you this letter some letters from other workers here at Galveston.

Revolutionary greetings,  
A. W.--Galveston, Texas, USA

Starving ex-soldier for united fight.

Atlanta, Ga.

Am unemployed for 8 months. Was a soldier in the world war where I fought for Wilson's equality and democracy for Negroes. Because of the wounds received in battle, I cannot get a job. They want younger fellows who they work like the devil for nothing at all.

The City here opened up a Community Kitchen dump. Everyday, hundreds of unemployed, starving Negroes and whites, go there with their two cents get a can of slop. But the Negroes, because of the discrimination there, are not going any longer. They would rather starve than be insulted as they are down there.

When a Negro does get past the insulting red tape and question cards he got to fill out, then he finds that he must have two cents and a tin can in order to get a cupful of stinking mixed vegetables and a hunk of stale bread, while whites get their choice of soup or milk and even some of them have coal delivered to their homes.

The Negroes are not putting up with these miserable conditions and are organizing into the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, to fight discrimination of all kinds, off the job and on the job.

Unemployed Negro Ex-Soldier

*The Negro Worker*, 1 (January, 1931): 29.

## 28. THE NEW FRONTIER OF NEGRO LABOR

By Charles S. Johnson

It is not enough to dismiss the question of Negro labor in the present crisis with the cold observation that their situation is just a part of labor's share in the depression. For, even when our economic system is functioning perfectly, according to its principle, the interest of Negro labor, as Negro labor, turns out to be in practice inherently at variance with the objectives of labor generally. The eternal conflict of race and class finds full expression in the characteristic patterns of industrial relations, whenever and wherever the Negro worker is involved. Philosophies come and go without disturbing seriously this fundamental traditional set.

Despite the obvious waste and illogic to a man from Mars, the disposition continues to be an insistence that Negro labor shall be nothing else but *Negro* labor, with an implication which is more racial than economic. It is not surprising, thus, that the perpetual storming against organized labor for excluding Negroes accomplishes so little. Whether it is as it should be or not, Labor is at present much less impressed with the internal compulsions of labor policy than with those of race, and has succeeded admirably in making this manifest. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that labor, as such, has little standing among American workers, and one weakness revealed in advocacy of their own aims has at its roots the compromising ambition eventually to desert their role as well as their philosophy. Notwithstanding the desire of all those who wish Negro labor well, who hope for some common recognition of identity of aims, and a consorting friendliness of purpose among American workers, when issues become taut, as they are now, the cleavage widens by the very weight of separate group interests. The future of the Negro as a worker, barring the cataclysmal possibility of a revolution, either economic or social, is bound up with the special fate of the Negro as a race.

The process of industrialization in this country, not to complicate the discussion with other predisposing factors to our present situation, has been so rapid and so complete, as to outstrip its cultural growth. When Margot Asquith visited the United States several years ago she made the engaging observation that our progress was ahead of our civilization. There has, indeed, been progress; a tumultuous, heedless progress which has all too often

taken little account of the human elements involved. Science has applied itself to the prevention and reclamation of material waste, but there has been no comparable technological consideration of the worker stranded by the cold "robotic" efficiency of the machine which science has created. And after all, of what value are more and more goods, greater precision, and economy of production, if the passion to achieve these consumes the very end and aim of the effort.<sup>19</sup>

Actually no group in America reflects so completely the whole course of our industrialization and its growing pains, as do the Negro workers. They are the oldest surviving labor group; they are linked historically with the founding and the successive stages of development of the new world. It was upon their early labors that tobacco, rice, indigo, sugar and cotton, each in its turn, gave to the new world a means of prosperous survival. The essence of the early agricultural economy demanded their presence and got them in irretrievable numbers. They were the foundation of our present machine culture and actually performed most of the early industrial tasks. Their labor has finally created a situation which renders them virtually unessential and unnecessary. They are not the only unnecessary ones, it is true. But they are, in the same sense that they are regarded as Negro labor, as unnecessary as slave labor is unnecessary in this age. Their chief heritage of status from the past is that undifferentiated one of mass labor for certain tasks. And in this status, valuable as it once was, they can neither be completely absorbed nor completely expelled.

In the South until the Civil War they were the blind content of an institution which held a vast white working population relentlessly to the ground. This period witnessed the beginning of a bitter enmity, economic at base, but racially focused, which survives today in every detail of race relations in the South. For the institution of slavery required no white workers, and they were simply eliminated from the picture by their blood kin despite the potency, for argument's sake, of the kinship of blood. They were driven off to the barren hills, forced into a degrading poverty beneath even the Negroes, reasoned out of the right to work as the Negroes were reasoned out of the right to enjoy the fruits of their own labor. It was this period that found Negro workers both "capable and acceptable for all grades of work, from the rough labor of the plantations to the artisanry of the towns." They did it all, and, so long as their skilled services could be leased, or bought or exchanged for profit, they were bluntly defended in their monopoly. When with the abolition of slavery the white workers were released and began their march to power the bitterness gathered itself into gall. They began to dominate politics and pass laws. In South Carolina one of the first acts was to legislate the Negroes out of the textile industry, the "only characteristic industry of the South."

Between 1880 and 1907 every southern state enacted laws intended to separate the races and limit the privilege of franchise. In effect this legislation, backed by a solid sentiment, threw up an economic breastwork of protection for white workers against the free competition of the blacks who had the sole advantage of actual possession of the trades as a heritage of three hundred years of slavery. By 1880 the census could mark for them an absolute decline in the skilled trades; there was conflict, employing fiery racial arguments in a fundamentally economic situation. By 1900 these jobs had not only been successfully challenged, but the arguments had proceeded to the point of actually denying their capacity for skilled work.

In the North their inconsiderable numbers until recently made them a negligible factor in mass. Immigrants from South Europe were the grist of the expanding mills. And although there survive memories of clashes with the Irish in the middle eighties, over the rough work of the cities, and still later with the Italians in the vast railway extension projects, their essentialness to the North began virtually with the hectic artificial acceleration of a war emergency. Now that this is over and a hopeful residue of a million and a half of this restless army of black workers remains in the North, what of their future? For their future is that of all marginal workers, and is bound up with American industry and business, and with the very structure of American life.

It is entertaining at times to indulge in the reflection that the temperament of the Negro is the one mass quality in America which is resisting the corruptive influence of mechanization; that he has his own racial rhythm; that in a folk sense he creates so many new and quaint variations of any given pattern as to render him helpless in the midst of those higher, unvaried rhythms

of mass production. This would be comforting if it were possible for him to be as distinctive as his racial temperament, in commanding a sufficiency of material goods for existence in a highly competitive society. But this is the status of wards, or of decorative appurtenances of some yet unachieved society with enough general wealth and well being to preserve such idyllic relics of a pastoral past. And although some Negroes would undoubtedly enjoy it, if one is to judge by their habits of work, it is impossible now. The Negro worker must yet live and draw his sustenance in a competitive struggle with workers who have adjusted themselves to the exacting tempo of the machine.

Cheap Negro labor is more and more being supplanted by machinery or cheaper Mexican labor, and the traditional "Negro jobs" are disappearing. Cotton culture is passing out of their hands and cotton fabrication has never included them, and apparently has no intention of doing so. Menial public service jobs such as street cleaning and garbage collection, to which no self-respecting white man would stoop, are rapidly becoming exclusively white men's jobs under the euphonious badge of "white wings" and "sanitary squads." Personal service positions such as hotel waiters, bellmen and porters, barbering, catering and bootblacking are comfortably distributing themselves among the French, Italians, Germans and Greeks.

The changing character of industry itself has resulted in erratic employment fluctuations in all classes of labor. An effect not to be ignored here is the excess of workers created who are not too proud to compete in the lower ranges of labor. The rapid introduction of machinery into industry has brought vast displacements in mining, road building, brick making, tobacco handling and rehandling, farming, and threatens among other fields, cotton picking from which hundreds of thousands at present, get a living. The entrance of women to industry since the war provides an even cheaper labor source for light manufacturing than Negro labor at its best underbidding rates, and excludes in large part Negro women except in laundries and certain tobacco industries where adequate machinery has not yet been devised to displace them. The increased urbanization of rural workers following the decline of agriculture in sections and, in turn, following the use of labor saving machinery on the farm, and the disappearance of free land, are crowding the cities with cheap and eager labor. The reduction of man power generally in factories, following technological improvements and efficient economies in the handling and routing of materials, until quite recently hailed as a triumph of the skill of the industrial engineer, are now unmistakably felt as inevitable displacement for the eternal marginal man. The heartlessness of the process is evident in such an instance as this: When the army of unemployed in our present slump began to reach disturbing proportions, many without prospects of other jobs found that they could eke out an existence of a sort by selling apples. Then some clever gentleman invented an automatic apple vending machine, which, with ironic thoroughness, has crashed their last defense against the bread line.

From a somewhat exaggerated position of importance as labor the vast bulk of Negroes find themselves precariously stranded. They have been carried through the conditioning of the cotton era, and are just emerging from it practically with mentality and musculature adjusted to its simple and almost elementary routine. Like the rest of America they have passed from an agricultural to an industrial economy, but with two significant differences: (1) the struggle for economic security, which is characteristically one of class, is complicated for them by the added factor of race and color with its highly charged emotional complexes; (2) the process has left them very largely without skill and few means of obtaining it.

Unskilled labor has been most seriously affected by machinery and by the industrial changes and the largest proportions of Negro workers (75 per cent or more) are unskilled. In the building trades the structure of buildings is changing from lumber to steel. There have been many Negro carpenters but few structural steel workers and few chances for apprenticeship in this new field. The number of carpenters per thousand of the population has, thus, actually declined since 1910. The painters, glaziers, varnishers, have suffered a similar decline since 1910, because much of this is now done in factories. Brick and stone masons and plasterers have declined about 50 per cent since 1890, because of the shifted emphasis in trade. Wheelwrights and coopers are gone, probably forever. This work is done in factories by machinery. Moreover, steel drums, pails, sacks and other containers have replaced the wooden barrel. Machinists have increased seven fold, but the machinists unions bar Negroes.

Trucks are replacing drays and also competing with railway transportation. The trucking, increasingly, is becoming a chain proposition instead of an individual venturing.

Dr. Julius Klein has pointed out that there has been a world wide shift from coal to oil and hydro-electric power. The coal industry reflects this in its decline, and in the disintegration of the industry in Kentucky and West Virginia. The particular figures for Illinois mines give a picture which well characterizes the situation. Between 1918 and 1928 there were fewer mines operated, fewer men employed, fewer days of employment for miners, and less coal was produced, but there was an increase in average tons per man per day. Negro workers have been 7.3 per cent of the workers in the coal industry but a very negligible per cent of the oil industry. There are fewer factory workers generally than in 1920 but increasingly more goods are being produced. Hand laundering is giving place to machinery requiring skill and permitting the entrance of white women workers, and one of the most recent but powerfully effective laundry advertisements suggests that milady should "avoid contagion in shanty washed clothes." In the name of hygiene, a blow is struck at the Negro washerwoman who has been the backbone of stability for the Negro laborer's family. Moreover, washing machines in the homes are doing their bit in further reducing the necessity for Negro washerwomen. Oil burning furnaces with thermostat control strike at the Negro janitor, as do manless elevators. Ditch digging machinery has quietly eliminated thousands of Negro road workers as the new hoisting machinery in building is eliminating the well known Negro job of hod-carrying.

Stuart Chase traces the process of the new industry as follows: first the specialization and the machinery which merely gives more power to the skilled worker; then the subdivision of the manufacturing process which makes use of many unskilled workers on dull routine; finally the elimination of the unskilled workers (the robots) by more complicated machinery calling back the skilled worker. The Negro workers do not seriously profit by the first and third and share the second state with new women workers. The vital fact is that the most important fields of Negro work have been affected by both the temporary and permanent depression. The changes have placed white and Negro workers more acutely in competition for the same jobs, since race is here given greater value than class, with the result that white workers, are most frequently given preference by employers.<sup>20</sup>

The field of skilled work, which absorbs, at least temporarily, a portion of the excess workers, is coming increasingly under the control of labor organizations which either restrict or do not encourage Negro memberships. The new industries which are expanding,--the radio, aeroplane, automobile service, the manufacture of complicated labor saving machinery, trucking, etc., restrict Negro employment to certain grades of work, and are making apprenticeship for the new trades practically impossible. The pressure for the few new jobs has, in known instances, stimulated efforts of anxious protective organizations to urge employment of white workers before placing Negroes. These have not excluded women's clubs, and Junior Leagues, but have found most notorious expression in the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Shirts. Since 1910 more than 500,000 Mexicans have entered the country, unrestricted by the quotas applied to Europeans and others. They are finding the lowest American scale, for fruit and cotton picking in Texas and California, superior to their agricultural wages at home. From the southwest they have moved into Illinois, Michigan and Pennsylvania, invading the tentative borders of the very recent Negro migrants. The truth is, they are no more capable of skill than the Negroes, granted a long enough exposure to that range of work. It is inevitable that the cycle will include the semi-skilled and skilled ranges of work as it has moved geographically from Texas and California to Illinois and Pennsylvania.

The unemployment roles present an almost unvarying picture of Negro workers. The first workers to be affected are the unskilled and the casuals. The newest comers are the first goers, a matter of priority; jobs easy to learn are easiest dispensed with. The few unemployment studies made where there is an important body of Negro labor reflect the weight of these factors. Mr. Embree cites the city of Baltimore, for example. The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that the Negroes were 32.6 per cent of the unemployed although only 14.7 of the population. The New York State Department of Labor at the end of 1930 found the Negroes ranking below the native white and foreign born in amount of full time employment. Of native white men, 64.2 were employed full time;

of foreign born, 53.8, and of Negroes 42.5 while only 31.9 per cent of the Negro women as compared with 74.7 of the native white and 63.4 of the foreign born were employed full time. For both sexes just about twice as many Negroes as native born were totally unemployed.

The most certain relief in this period has been coming from municipalities themselves in the form of emergency public work. An examination of employment statistics in 25 cities by the National Urban League revealed that between January 1st and September 30, 1930 there had been a decline of 34.5 per cent in the number of available jobs for Negro workers and a 40 per cent increase in applications for work.

Now the easiest way to dismiss the troublesome future is to put the responsibility for change hopefully upon Providence or some sudden mystic social enlightenment. If dominant industry, and labor which aspires to dominance, would only forget color, the lot of the Negro worker would be easier. This seldom happens by and of itself. But it can be and is often disregarded when it is profitable to do so. So long, however, as color carries the connotation of inefficiency and unnecessary to employers, and of an unwarranted and menacing usurpation of jobs, to labor, it will ever be the badge of the marginal worker. And such a worker need never hope for full participation in the dominant American economy. With the disposition of labor organizations to oppose sharing the available work on grounds of race, these black workers are on the mercies of employers, frail reeds in times of need all too often. Except where some favorable personal factor enters, or wages are to be reduced, or there is a strike, or a sudden emergency, their chances are uneven. It seems an unsound principle, to say the least, for Negro workers to have to pin their security in work upon the misfortune of their fellow-workers.

It should be evident, however, despite the fact that there is no single source of responsibility for their drastic exclusion from some industries and the limitation of the opportunity to work in others, that the community must pay for the policy which it countenances. It usually pays indirectly in the magnified costs of relief, of protection against crime, in the support of offenders against the law, in illness and the loss of earning as well as spending power. For whether wise or not this group most nearly approaches the earnings in circulation. Most significantly, however, though less impressively, the community pays in what the system of exclusion and humiliation does to the sense of fair play itself. The blanket policies against special jobs or special ranges of skill mean a loss to efficient man power of at least that proportion of the Negro working population that earlier showed an exceptional capacity for skilled performance.

At any step forward an interesting paradox interposes; the acquirement of status and security by Negro workers is the only means by which they can develop their moral powers and full value as citizens; but this very development renders more acute the conflict of racial policies and relations. It has been pointed out that Negro labor in its old concept is not essential to present industry, that this labor has, nevertheless, along with all America, been carried on the wave of general advance, and that in its present status it cannot be expelled and is not desired for incorporation. This is merely a reflection of that curious paradox of present American life which makes it impossible for Negroes either to develop their own culture or to share fully the dominant one. In this relationship they are somewhat unique; The American Indians, who until recently were wards of the government, kept their cultural autonomy but became economically dependent; the Orientals, so soon as they had reached a point of acute competition, were expelled; the Jews, who represent a minority group in America, have both the cohesive influence of a religion and an economy which sustains itself through a special financial skill. The South Europeans, once a minority, are affected adversely by economic factors, but may lose themselves in the second generation. The Negroes remain a recognizable bloc, ever wearing the visible livery of their station.

In the mood of the present implications of the Negroes' place in industry, it would be entirely logical to look forward to the complete separation of industries according to race. It is perfectly clear that this would be as economically unsound as it would be socially absurd. There survives out of the most recent changes in industry a tendency to employ Negroes in iron and steel, on heat jobs; for longshoring, which demands a combination of strength and agility. The first of these is based upon a favorable myth, which is as groundless as that larger group of myths by which they are excluded from other lines;



longshoring is being affected by declining river transportation and the introduction of loading machinery. It might be possible to found upon preference in certain limited fields a cult of competence which would automatically eliminate competition, but this in a sense would be as unfair as the practices against which protests are made. Again, it might be rationally urged that Negroes should receive their pro-rata share of unskilled, skilled and even professional positions according to their population proportion. But there is no dictator to enforce such specious even handedness. Negro business as an absorbent of the higher ranges of Negro skill is a mirage and an impossible economy.

The situation demands, in the absence of any sure, powerful leadership, deliberate education and strategy to overcome the emotional opposition to full inclusion of Negro workers in the pattern of American life. What appeals to good-will and the generosity of their hard pressed and scarcely sympathetic fellow-workers cannot accomplish must be accomplished with the aid of economic laws. To enjoy anything approaching an independent status the Negro workers must achieve it by some effort of their own. This, then, is their new economic frontier. The task ahead is the creative one of remaking Negro labor to fit the exigencies of the new age, if they are to survive in it. This is the economic imperative of the new race!

It is scarcely worthwhile to dwell upon the present character of Negro labor. It is by no means an abused mass of indifferentiated competence. The extent to which only moderately competent and even incompetent Negro labor has been able to exist at all is one of the best auguries for this labor under a new discipline which makes superior competence in all ranges of skill the price they must pay for being Negroes. The fundamental lack, strange to say, has not been skill, but a developed sense of those more generalized patterns of precision and craftsmanship. The ease with which the Japanese could shift from an age old eastern culture to that of the West is due not so much to the precision of imitation as to a well-developed technique for manipulation which could be transferred to any given set of problems. Such is the value of a college for providing a student with a technique, which, though not related to any given occupation may be transferred to any field. Such is the value and should be the insistence of all the elementary schools where Negro youth are in attendance, and such is the special task of our technical schools, which should be increasingly concerned with the development of these mental and physical habit sets.

The possibility is suggested of selecting and training those youth of exceptional ability to a point of unquestioned superiority in a wide range of fields, counting upon them to influence the others to higher standards of workmanship, directly through training, and indirectly through the stimulation of example within the group. The patterns of competence thus set will inevitably color attitudes toward all of them as workers and as citizens, both by enforcing an actual competence on their part and by dispelling fears of mass substitution of black for white labor on the part of their fellow-workers. It will offer the first full range of opportunity for those who wish to and are able to improve their status, insure a new confidence in labor performed by Negroes and give a new significance to the industrial programs designed to aid these workers.

Although it has scarcely been recognized, the new age of machinery has rendered archaic and ruinous the dual and mutually exclusive chambers of "white" and "black" labor; only the shell of the social customs remains. Black labor as a group asset died with the institution of slavery which created it. The institution of slavery did not completely expire with the Civil War. It owes as much of its death as has been accomplished quite recently to the relentless course of a more efficient, even if less idyllic system. It probably would have been as effective without a civil war. The logic of this new economy permits no specific sphere for black labor of all grades and degrees of competency, without an enormous waste both to industry and to national life. The present transgression of the boundaries of these spheres by white workers, in their clamorous demand for "black jobs," even to the point of passing ordinances to insure street cleaners' jobs and murdering Negro railroad firemen, is only an admission of the cold color blindness of this process.

The black workers face one of the most intense periods of their history, and in the struggle for survival they have the weight of many factors against them. But it is becoming increasingly clear that, at bottom, the contest

is not between white and black labor; it is between the imperatives of our new economic system and the surviving social orthodoxies of the old.

*Opportunity*, 10 (June, 1932): 168-73.

## 29. AN EMERGENCY IS ON!

By T. Arnold Hill

Negro workers are being discharged by employers whose belief in white supremacy will not tolerate their paying Negroes a wage equal to that paid white. Fearful that such practices will force many Negroes now employed into idleness, some are suggesting that the codes of the National Industrial Recovery Act provide a dual wage scale--one that will allow the option of paying a smaller wage to Negroes than to whites.<sup>21</sup>

Such a position is economically unsound and socially unjust. Few employers will pay more for their labor than they have to. If they can get Negroes cheaper than they can whites, the latter will often find themselves unwanted and unemployed. This condition will tend to perpetuate the age-old strife between the two groups and make for actual warfare at a time when it takes little to foment either racial or industrial discord.

Moreover, it is impossible to have national recovery as long as one-ninth of the nation's workers are not given the opportunity to recover. If high wages are essential to an improved economic and social state, then recovery of business and public welfare is retarded to the extent that low wages are permitted. In leaving agricultural and domestic workers out of the code formula, the bulk of Negro workers, some 3,000,000 out of a total of 5,500,000, will continue to live under a system which is little better than slavery. Wages now for domestic workers in the South are down to as low as \$1.50 per week, and three dollars a week is regarded as a good wage.

It has been contended that what the nation needs to lift it out of the depression is adequate consumption for normal production of goods. Because we are not able now to consume all products farmed, it is costing the government millions to subsidize farmers who are turning crops back into the soil rather than harvest them for a market over-stocked with farm products. If the 2,500,000 Negroes in the North and the 9,500,000 in the South earned more they would buy more. The masses of Negroes have never purchases enough food, clothing, furniture, transportation, hospitalization, and the like. Twelve million people would greatly expand production if they were employed and paid according to their economic value rather than their social status.

If a correlation were established between the wages paid Negro workers and the minimum wage level for all workers, it would undoubtedly show that the starvation wages received by Negroes have been directly responsible for limiting the economic security of all workers, as well as for contracting the market for consumer goods. Thus, Mississippi and South Carolina must forever be backward states as long as one-half the members of their population are not allowed sufficient livelihood to purchase their normal share of their state's products.

If employers are unwilling to pay Negroes wages equal to those paid whites, then let them be discharged. There should be no wage distinction based upon race in the NRA codes. To the extent that people are unemployed, to that same extent will those who work have to take care of them. This fits Negroes as well as whites. If all Negroes are discharged in the South, so that whites may work, then the employed whites will have to support the idle Negroes. It is unfair, of course, that the race should be forced into mendicancy, but it is better that Negro workers insist upon wages equal to those paid whites, even if it means their ultimate discharge, than to accept smaller wages and thereby perpetuate the class distinctions that now exist. Neither position is a satisfactory one for the Negro, but it is fair to assume that if the burden of support for the maintenance of Negroes were thrown upon the State, conditions would tend to right themselves much more quickly than if Negroes submitted to a smaller wage.

But more than this, the Government of the United States and the Recovery

Administration, must put an end to this hypocrisy for the sake of national integrity. At some point this system of exploitation must cease. It impedes prosperity and disqualifies the government as a democracy fit to pass sentence upon other nations. President Roosevelt cannot permit the United States to rush to the protection of Cuba and at the same time tolerate the enslavement of its own fellow-citizens. Neither can our economic experts permit race prejudice to nullify all the thinking, planning and work that have gone into the agricultural and industrial plans for business recovery. Is the New Deal departing from the conventional in all important national issues, to be listless to the plight of twelve million persons, merely because they are darker than the other 110,000,000? Are we to have a New Deal for whites and an old deal for Negroes? The United States cannot possibly remain an international arbiter if it continues to neglect to arbitrate its own domestic affairs.

As serious a national blunder as the neglect of Negroes is, it is not as disturbing as the failure of Negroes to rouse themselves on behalf of their own salvation. This is largely because Negro leaders have not agreed upon a program. They are in agreement that something is wrong; and while they suspect that it has its foundation in economics, they are not sure what the "something" is, nor how to get rid of it. Those who have been leading are unwilling to try new ideas or new personnel. Ignorance and custom are not the only drawbacks. Traditional enmities, factional differences, organizational loyalties, personal likes and dislikes--all stand in the way of a united front at a time when the most potent weapon is the impact upon governmental authority of a solidified public opinion representative of Negroes everywhere and of every activity in life. There has been no honorable attempt to bring this about. When efforts are undertaken with the same bias and selfishness that have so often characterized projects of this sort heretofore, then we can expect weak organizations, weak support, and weak results.

An emergency is on. It calls for forthright leadership that will indoctrinate Negro masses with an awareness of the effect of economic relationships upon other aspects of life. It demands leadership that will provide a program for insulating Negroes with industrial and occupational information and firing them with devotion to a cause that is just and fruitful. This leadership is needed to compel the respect of the Administration and to build an esprit de corps among the masses of Negroes who are ready psychologically for a program as they have never been before.

*Opportunity*, 11 (September, 1933): 280-81.

30.

SECRETARY OF LABOR FRANCES PERKINS TO  
EUGENE KINCKLE JONES, APRIL 27, 1933

My dear Mr. Jones:<sup>22</sup>

May I congratulate you on the Special Memorandum for the President on "The Social Adjustment of Negroes in the United States." He has asked me to tell you that he is very glad indeed to have this factual summary. He realizes the unfavorable economic position of the Negro, and the tremendous suffering which the present depression has brought to them and to other unskilled as well as skilled workers. But in spite of the discouragements of the immediate past, he finds great hope for the Negro race in the enormous progress it has made in the last 30 years. Gradually Negro workers have succeeded in securing more skilled and responsible jobs, have made their way in professions and in business. There is also great encouragement in the progress that has been made in the reduction of illiteracy, of infant mortality, and of the general death rate among Negroes.

I can assure you that as this Administration undertakes the problems of relief administration of providing work opportunities, of raising basic wage levels, etc., etc., we shall not forget the special problems of the more than ten million people who belong to your race.

I note that you refer specifically to certain abuses or discriminations in connection with the Mississippi flood control and the Boulder dam project

under the past Administration. I am sure that as far as it is legally possible under the contracts already made the President will leave nothing undone which will prevent or stop the exploitation of workmen, whether white or colored, by Federal contractors. I am personally at work on the problem of making sure that labor standards will be more fully provided for in future government undertakings.

As for the Employment Service, this is my own immediate responsibility. You have perhaps seen from the papers that a complete reorganization of the Service is under way. It will take some time to put the cooperative Federal and State system on the kind of basis which will insure real service for working men and women. I can assure you, however, that I shall be glad to have any suggestions you may have from time to time as to how the Service may serve more efficiently all classes of labor.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) FRANCES PERKINS,<sup>23</sup>  
Secretary

*Opportunity*, 11 (June, 1933): 169.

### 31. INDUSTRIAL AND LABOR CONDITIONS

#### Washington Conference on the Economic Status of the Negro

A conference on the economic status of the Negro was held in Washington, May 11 to 13, 1933, under the auspices of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, with an attendance largely of economists and sociologists, both colored and white, from all parts of the country. Beginning with a discussion of the population and occupational trends of the Negro from 1890 to 1930, the conference considered the relation of the Negro to unemployment in the various industries in which he has established himself, the human factors in the displacement and reemployment of Negro workers, the future of the Negro in America, the effect of the depression upon his position in the South, the agricultural outlook, the social needs of Negro children, the effect of present conditions upon the employment of Negro women and upon the family, the adjustments and cooperation needed in the relation of credit agencies to the Negro farmer, whether owner, tenant or share cropper, the economic status of the Negro in business and the professions, race relations and economics, the role of the small southern farm in any future land utilization program, and the next steps called for both to meet the immediate emergency and to prepare a long-term plan of advancement. Several of these topics were treated by more than one speaker, and some of them roused considerable discussion as to what present conditions imply and how they can best be met. The program was such a full and varied one that the "findings committee," appointed to sum up its results, was obliged to postpone its report until it should have had time to consider the papers and discussions more fully. In passing, it may be noted that to a very marked degree the papers and addresses presented had a factual basis. Sweeping generalizations were lacking, and in their place were careful statistical studies to support the assertions as to the past or hopes for the future. Although no final summing up was presented, there was rather general agreement on some salient features.

It was held to be well established that the Negro's economic status had distinctly improved within the last 40 years. The census of 1890 showed that, of the gainfully employed Negroes at that time, 87 per cent were either in agriculture or in domestic and personal service, and only 13 per cent in all other pursuits. In 1930 the proportion in other pursuits had risen to 34.7 per cent and Negroes were found in practically all the occupations listed. While in many lines they are handicapped by discrimination against them, nevertheless the less their number is noticeably increasing in those pursuits requiring some skill, initiative, experience, and special training.

Again, it was rather generally agreed that in the industries in which the

Negro has gained a foothold he has not, during this depression, suffered disproportionately from unemployment. He has suffered, just as the white worker has, but relatively he has not lost ground, and his unemployment has been a matter of economic rather than of racial factors.

However, the fact that the race is still largely engaged in two of the great occupational groups which have suffered severely, agriculture and domestic and personal service, has led to a larger amount of unemployment among the colored than among whites and has forced them to appear in disproportionate numbers among the seekers of relief. Negro women, in particular, have been hard hit by unemployment because of the extent to which they have been engaged in household service, a kind of work in which more easily and quickly than in almost any other an employer may retrench when income falls off. Among the Negroes it is not uncommon for married women to be gainfully employed, so that their unemployment is at once reflected in the family income. Consequently, the Negro family is under a greater strain, and there is danger of its serious disorganization. The social needs of Negro children, the unemployment of the women as well as of the men, and the stresses thrown upon the family were brought out as interrelated factors, as well as matters of individual suffering.

In the matter of relief, it was agreed that in most parts of the country there had been no discrimination against the Negro from either private or public sources. In a few places the relief standards were reported as being lower for the colored than for the white, but this was unusual. For the causes mentioned above, unemployment has been more widespread among the Negroes, and they have formed therefore a larger proportion of those needing relief than they do of the general population.

For the future it was held that there must be a strong and continuous effort to hold what the Negro has gained and to secure further advances. Farming in the South would present some special advantages, but at present the Negro who wishes to take it up is handicapped by inability to secure good land in acreages suited to his needs, by lack of familiarity with improved methods, by poor equipment and by lack of credit facilities, as well as by the disadvantages which affect farmers in general just now. Agricultural schools and courses, demonstration farms, and county or community agents of their own race were advocated. If to these were added opportunities to secure at a reasonable price something better than marginal land, fair credit facilities and instruction as to how to use them, county or community activities which would give the small farmer some chances of education for his children, hospitalization and medical care for his family and himself, and reasonable provision against the more serious disadvantages of his present isolated position, the drift to the city would probably be stopped, and the Negro would find a field of activity congenial to his character and beneficial alike to himself and the country as a whole.

It was urged that, industrially and professionally, better and more abundant opportunities for education and training are desirable, and that along with these should go continuous effort to break down the unwritten restrictions which now operate to keep Negroes out of many occupations and callings. Vocational training should be advanced, and vocational counselors should consider it a fundamental part of their work to induce employers to give the Negro students a chance to enter the callings for which they were preparing themselves. Negroes should help the movement along, when possible, by an intelligent choice of uncongested occupations, and by the use of their buying power to secure openings for others.

For the immediate future it was suggested that there is serious danger that, as industry revives, the Negro may not be reemployed in proportion to his numbers. Competition will be fierce, and wherever a group finds that it can use race discrimination to increase its own chances it will be very apt to do so. Strong efforts should be made to guard against this. Under the reorganization measures now before Congress, it was pointed out, both employers and organized labor receive various concessions and are to be subjected to certain regulations; some definite measures for the recognition and proportionate absorption of colored labor might well be added as the plans are worked out. Obviously, a number of agencies must be set up to develop policies and procedure with regard to public-works programs, the administration of credit agencies, the regulation of private business, the promotion of building projects and the like; but it was pointed out that unless the claims of the Negro are definitely and persistently and forcibly brought before such bodies there is

real danger that he will be overlooked or neglected, and that the reorganization of industry may leave him in a worse position than before.

One suggestion offered was that the Negroes should undertake cooperative experiments, using their own labor power and their own demands as consumers to build up self-sustaining or nearly self-sustaining communities, and to secure better opportunities for self-development. Another called for the establishment of fact-finding agencies to discover potential demands for Negro labor and to secure more diversification of employment within the race.

The conference closed on a note of hopefulness. Mr. Edwin R. Embree, president of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, pointed out that apparently this was the first major depression in which the Negroes' unemployment had been caused by economic factors with the racial element either altogether lacking or of small importance, and that this spoke much for the gain in standing they had made. Also, he considered that the outlook for the future is good. Politically, he said the Negro is gaining in power, and his possibilities from an economic standpoint are beginning to be appreciated. His potential buying power offers business a new and important opportunity. "An increase in employment and of standards of living among Negroes would increase the buying power of the country by more than the total amount of our present exports. The greatest undeveloped market for American goods is the 12,000,000 Negroes in our midst."

*Monthly Labor Review*, 37 (July, 1933): 42-44.

## 32. SOME IMPACTS OF THE DEPRESSION UPON THE NEGRO IN PHILADELPHIA

By Joseph H. Willits

I have slightly modified the title assigned to me because the original title seemed to indicate that I had made an exhaustive study of the subject directly. I have not. What I present are some sidelights on the effects of the depression on the Negro in Philadelphia,--sidelights which have incidentally been brought out of other studies.

### Introduction

The justification for presenting data which are limited to one locality is that this locality exhibits some considerable degree of representativeness of the manufacturing area of the country.

The chief sources of the data which I shall present are the five censuses of unemployment which have been conducted by the Industrial Research Department of the University of Pennsylvania from 1929-1933 inclusive; and from the analyses of the men who applied for made-work in Philadelphia in the winter of 1930-31. The censuses were made by Mr. Emmett Welch, Research Associate of the Industrial Research Department, and the analysis of made-work applications by Dr. Ewan Clague and Mr. Webster Powell of the Community Council.

The recent migration of many Negroes city-ward, with the attendant problems of adaptation to urban industrial life, has not made the weathering of a prolonged period of depression easier for the Negro. In fact, migration by anyone in the hope of securing employment just prior to the depression, would tend to place the migrant at a disadvantage, when contraction in business conditions took place. In the case of the Negro in Philadelphia, this factor has, therefore, been added to the many others which have tended to make the Negro feel the effects of the depression more promptly than white workers.

In order to discover to what extent unemployment has affected Negroes in the Philadelphia community, comparisons with other groups in the population will be made. A few basic facts which will serve as a background for these comparisons will first be presented. From 1920 to 1930, the total population of the city increased 7 per cent. For this same period the white population increased 63.5 per cent,--from 134,229 to 219,559. In 1930, Negroes constituted 13.36 per cent of Philadelphia's gainfully employed (10 years and over).

An occupational analysis of Philadelphia workers made by the United States

Census Bureau for 1930, lists under the classification of manufacturing and mechanical industries (for males) nearly 27 per cent of the total gainfully employed Negroes 10 years of age and over (of whom 65 per cent are laborers of some kind in these industries); nearly 14 per cent are engaged in transportation and communication (mostly as chauffeurs and truck and tractor drivers, garage laborers, road, street and steam railroad laborers, longshoremen and stevedores); nearly 5 per cent are classified under "trade;" only 2 per cent are in public service (not otherwise classified); about 1-1/2 per cent are listed as in "professional service" (of whom over 21 per cent are clergymen and 27 per cent are "all other occupations"); "domestic and personal service" embraces nearly 13 per cent (with janitors, porters, and servants making up the bulk of this group). Agriculture and the clerical occupations (males) account for slightly more than 2 per cent of the total gainfully employed Negro group. Among the females, the classification of domestic and personal service, includes over 30 per cent (with servants forming slightly more than 85 per cent of this group) while "manufacturing and mechanical industries" includes slightly more than 3-1/2 per cent of the women Negro workers. It will be important to keep these facts in mind, in interpreting the results of the various surveys.

#### Annual Unemployment Censuses Since 1929 (Philadelphia)

With these figures as a background we are in a position to consider the incidence of employment on the Negroes in the city of Philadelphia, as brought out in the available census figures which have been collected each year since 1929 by the Industrial Research Department of the University of Pennsylvania. These censuses were conducted in an eight per cent sample of the Philadelphia population, which has been found statistically to be representative of the whole city population. For the purpose of the surveys, the areas selected were distributed among the subdistricts of the ten school districts in Philadelphia approximately the same blocks being visited by the Department's numerators in each year's enumeration. Up to 1932, the census taken in April; in the latter year it was taken in May. The census for 1933 has just been completed, and although the total figures are known, the classification by race has not been completed.

The following figures give some of the more significant results from the four earlier censuses:

#### Philadelphia

Year	% all Gainful Workers Unemployed	% of Negroes Unemployed	% of Whites Unemployed	Part Time Unemployed City as Whole	Negro
1929	10.4	15.7	9.0		
1930	15.0	19.4	13.8	5.2	6.0
1931	25.5	35.0	34.1	18.8	14.0
1932	39.5	56.0	39.7	20.8	21.5

These figures indicate clearly that from the beginning of the unemployment period, the Negroes have shown a larger percentage of unemployment than the whites; but that as the depression continued, the percentage by which the unemployment ratio of Negroes exceeded the unemployment ratio of whites, tended to go down somewhat; but the percentage of unemployment among Negro employables still in 1932 was nearly half as high again as it was among the whites. We may put the situation of the Negro with respect to unemployment, more briefly by saying that whereas the Negro makes up nearly fourteen per cent of the city's wage earners he constitutes nearly twenty per cent of the city's unemployed.

The part-time unemployment figures show little difference between whites and Negroes, the proportions varying only slightly in each census period.

#### The "Made-work" Analysis of Unemployment

Further corroboration of this greater impact of the depression upon Negroes is suggested by the applicants at the Demonstration Employment Office run under

the auspices of the state. Of these, 82 per cent were white and 17 per cent Negro. It was found that Negro workers constituted almost half (44.7 per cent) of the applicants coming from domestic and personal service pursuits; 35.2 per cent from unskilled trades, and 8 per cent or less from other occupational groups. It was noted that a larger percentage of Negroes is found among the applicants than in the city's gainfully employed occupation. These figures may be influenced by the fact that the State Employment Office is located near the residence districts of the city where Negroes predominate.

Still further corroboration of this heavier unemployment among Negroes is found in the study of the applicants for "made-work" by Messrs. Ewan Clague and Webster Powell. It should be recalled that the "made work" was reserved for those unemployed whose need in the judgment of the investigators was greatest.

While colored males constituted slightly over 11 per cent of the total male population and formed 13.2 per cent of the employable wage earners they constituted 28.8 per cent of the "made-work" employees. The lesser wealth and income of the Negro forces a larger proportion of them to work for wages; there would not be among them, as there would be among the whites, any considerable number of adult males not gainfully employed, such as high school and college students, persons retired on their income, etc. The Negroes, then, were represented in "made work" to about 2-1/2 times the extent of their Philadelphia population, and considerably more than twice their proportion of employable wage earners.

On the basis of need, the Negroes qualified because of their much smaller savings than whites, with practically no home ownership, lower wages, etc. Moreover, if readiness to ask for help is examined, it is found that the newer (1920-30) migrants received a larger amount of "made-work" (relief) because of difficulties and handicaps of newcomers in a strange place. For example, many of these Negroes seemed to have had few opportunities in the South from whence they had come, had few resources on arrival, had to take the so-called poorer jobs, and when disaster came, they were less likely to have friends or relatives to help. It can thus be seen that the time of migration was closely associated with need for relief. This will be discussed in more detail later.

#### Unemployment by Age Groups

The censuses of the Industrial Research Department throw light on the amount of unemployment among different age groups. Invariably the age class 16-25 has the greatest burden with respect to total unemployed. Among the native whites, the percentage of unemployed in this group in 1931 is 35.5; for 1932, 50.5; for the Negroes, the figures are 45.3 and 63.3 respectively. The age group suffering least in 1931, among the native whites, is the 36-45 and among the Negroes, the 46-55 age group. With unemployment becoming more widespread in 1932, the age groups 36-45 and 46-55 share alike the honor for the least per cent of unemployment--among the whites (31.4 and 31.6); while for the Negro group, the age classes of 36-45 and 46-55 suffer least numerically (52.8 and 52.5). There is a tendency for the curve to start at its highest point at the lowest age class, becoming lowest at the middle group and then rising again at the oldest, but not to quite the same height as at the lowest. The same situation holds for both whites and Negroes. This state of affairs is somewhat contrary to the prevailing opinion that the age group just above 45 was the one which generally suffers first and most when hard times curtail industrial activity.

The percentages of total unemployment by the various age groups show in each case a larger figure for the Negroes than for the native whites. When one realizes that among the former, laborers and helpers in building construction form approximately 65 per cent of these Negroes listed in the 1930 Census for Philadelphia in the manufacturing and mechanical industries category, while in the native white classification this figure amounts to only 9 per cent, it might be inferred that in a prolonged period of unemployment, this group would suffer considerably more than the native white. The bad effects of this situation will be brought out later when economic effects are discussed.

#### Reasons for Unemployment of Individual Analyzed

In the surveys (1931 and 1932) conducted by the Industrial Research



Department, a question was included, asking the reason for the individual's unemployment. An analysis of the "made-work" applications also provided this information.

From the latter source, those who gave "laid-off," and "firms bankrupt, merged, moved away" as reasons formed well over 90 per cent of the total number, both white and colored. It is possible, of course, that they were laid off because they were the least efficient but in view of the comparatively long service records of these men, this reason does not seem to be the chief factor in accounting for the loss of jobs. So far as this small sample is concerned, the Negro here does not seem to be affected more adversely than whites.

It must be noted that this high figure--from the workers' own report of reasons for leaving his last permanent job--is much higher than the labor turnover figures given by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for 1931,--i.e., 70 per cent of all separations were due to layoffs (on the employer's own tabulation).

From the Industrial Research Department's unemployment census (in 1932) a slightly larger percentage of unemployed native whites reported "inability to find work" than did either the foreign born or Negroes. "Old age" was relatively less important as a reason for unemployment among the native white and Negro than among the foreign-born employables. This may be due mainly to the higher average age of foreign-born employables because of the immigration restriction of recent years. "Illness" was relatively more important among foreign-born and Negroes than among native whites.

#### Stability on the Job

Applicants for made-work relief were classified in regard to stability on the job, according to which a steady or regular job was defined as a job of 3 months or longer. Negroes did not have quite so good a record for stability as did the whites although these facts do not indicate where the cause is with the job or the Negro.

One-third of the Negroes and over one-half of the whites held jobs for over 5 years; and one-fifth of the whites had job records of over ten years.

The scarcity of longer jobs among the Negroes is unquestionably due in part to the fact that a very large proportion of them migrated in Philadelphia in recent years. Thus they did not have the opportunity to establish service records as long as those of white men. The figures also tend to lend support to the wide-spread opinion that Negroes are the first to suffer unemployment when layoffs become necessary because of their shorter service records. The nature of the occupations in which a large proportion of the Negroes is found must also be kept in mind in any attempt to understand the greater proportionate unemployment among Negroes.

The average length of longest job was only 3.8 years for Negroes as compared to 6.0 for whites. The percentage ratio of the longest job to the total working life was approximately 20 per cent for the Negroes and 30 per cent for the whites. About one-fifth of the entire working life of these colored men had been spent on one job. Though less impressive than the data for the whites, these figures do not by any means indicate that colored men are essentially unstable.

#### Average Length of Time Out of Work

Looking next at the average of time out of work up to the time persons came for relief to the Made-Work Bureau, the facts are similar for whites and Negroes: for Negroes 8.62 months; for whites, 8.56 months. It should be recalled that the construction and manufacturing industries account for 68 per cent of the "made-work" applicants. From the results of the April 1931 census (I.R.D.), the average time out of work was found to be 37 weeks--with the average duration of unemployment smallest among colored persons (31 weeks) and largest among foreign born (43.1 weeks). One explanation given for the relatively small duration of unemployment among the colored is the possibility that they are more generally engaged in casual and domestic work, and that persons thus engaged are more likely to be unemployed more frequently, but for shorter periods of time than persons in other pursuits.

The duration of unemployment, on a comparative basis, reveals little difference between the white and colored groups in the made-work study. A total

of 71 per cent of white and 72 per cent of Negroes had been out 9 months or less (1931).

#### Wage-Earners in Families

The marked shortage of wage earners in these families--1.3 average for white and 1.4 average for Negro families (resulting in a ratio of employables to persons per family of 27.3 and 31.0 respectively) might have had something to do with their plight in asking relief. Other censuses, the I.R.D. and the U.S. Census Bureau, have shown higher ratios of average number of wage earners to average number of persons per family, i.e., 42.6 and 45.6 respectively. The husband was the only wage earner in nearly 4/5 of these white families and 2/3 of the colored families. Supplementary wage earning support was furnished primarily by children in the white families and by the wife in the colored families. The explanation suggested here is that colored children do not remain at home they become self-supporting wage-earners--either getting married at an early age or going out and shifting for themselves.

#### Reserves and Earnings

Economic or financial resources accumulated preceding or during the depression ease or increase the impact of the loss of the individual's opportunity to work. Wages, savings, insurance, home ownership, credit reserves, etc., determine in large measure how great or how little the impact will be felt, and what alterations must be made in one's standard of living.

Questions concerning earnings received or last regular job were among those secured from "made-work" applicants. The largest proportion of whites reported earnings of \$25-29 per week; another large group reported earnings of \$30-34 per week. The Negroes' earnings were much more concentrated at one level. The largest group reported wages of \$20-24 per week, while nearly 62 per cent fell between \$20 and \$29. There were very few in the higher wage classes and very many in the lower ones under \$20.

Savings are the first reserve resources to be drawn on when unemployment comes. An examination of 325 colored families studied by Powell showed that about half had savings, although many of the accounts were small--28 per cent were of less than \$50; 45 per cent were of more than \$100. The median was \$86. White families studied, however, showed a median of \$204. A partial explanation of the situation is based on the fact that a large proportion of the Negroes was attached to the construction industry and to other industries of an unstable character, and irregular employment in such leaves small reserves to tide the family over between jobs. These savings were really adapted to the meeting of seasonal unemployment and were wholly inadequate for the longer period which these families were undergoing. Colored families had comparatively small reserves at best, and even those who had saved large amounts soon found themselves face to face with disaster. Bank or building and loan failures, bankruptcy, sheriff's sales, severe illness and death were a few of the more serious drains on the family reserves.

Reserves in the form of insurance were carried by more than half of the whites and Negroes--the weekly premium averaging \$1.40 for the former and \$1.26 for the latter. The asset value of these reserves for emergency purposes was very small, as much of it was of the "industrial type" which has no cash or surrender value until carried a long way toward maturity.

Home ownership may or may not be an asset in a long period of depression. Powell found that 24 per cent of the white families and 4 per cent of the Negroes reported home ownership; while Clague's figures were 23 per cent and 2 per cent. In this respect, the Negroes were considered by social workers more fortunate, in that they had not sunk their meagre wages in real property.

A form of credit reserved which is closely allied to home ownership is the amount of arrears in monthly payments on homes. Data available from the Powell study indicate 42 per cent of white and 75 per cent Negro home owners in arrears. However, because of the small group of Negroes who are home owners this latter comparison is not significant. Unpaid rent--a type of forced credit reserves--is reported in the Powell study by 63 per cent of the whites and 66 per cent of the Negroes. Clague's study states that over half of the whites and almost 70 per cent of the colored persons reported this as an important factor in getting along.

A rent survey made by the Philadelphia Housing Association in December 1932 reported for the properties studied, 33.8 per cent whites and 56.0 per cent Negroes in arrears. The average length of time in arrears for whites was 4 months, and for Negroes 3.8 months. The rate of new occupancy in houses occupied by whites was 33.5 per cent, and 41.5 per cent by Negroes. This is said to account for the lower average of months in arrears among Negroes than among whites. This survey did not include slum properties, and so represents the situation among that part of the industrial population, normally better housed than those living in the slums.

Records of ease of borrowing show (according to Powell) that the white population is more favorably situated in this respect--36 per cent against 28 per cent having been able to borrow. Loans average \$192 for the whites and \$75 for the Negroes. Nearly 84 per cent of the whites and 88 per cent of the Negroes had contracted debts of some kind, the average indebtedness being \$186 and \$92 respectively.

#### Relation to Standard of Living

All this bears an important relation to the standard of living of these families, and it is here that the cumulative results of the effects of unemployment are brought to light. Powell estimated that white families with savings and credit could have continued operations on the old scale for about 8 months. Negro families, with reserves very much lower, could have continued 6 weeks before all resources would have been exhausted.

The actual fact was that the median white family had been out of work for 6.3 months and the Negro for 5.7 months. This difference was made up by reducing the standard of living, moving to cheaper quarters, doubling up with relatives and friends, buying bulkiest and cheapest foods, spending nothing on clothing, etc. There was more than a 50 per cent drop in the white standard--from a \$35-\$40 a week to \$10-\$15 and a 75 per cent drop in the colored standard, from a \$20-\$25 a week level to \$3-\$6. The colored family had only half the resources to fall back on, and they made these last almost as long as did the whites before asking for help from the Emergency Work Bureau.

The climax of all these various impacts of unemployment comes when the families are forced to seek charitable relief from social agencies, and it is generally found to be a "last resort" step. Figures supplied by the Philadelphia County Board as of April first, 1933, show that nearly 36 per cent (35.7 per cent) of the families receiving relief were Negroes. This represents a decrease in the proportion of Negro families carried on relief of nearly 10 per cent from the figures given as of December 31, 1932. On December 31, 1932 the Bureau of Personal Assistance had under its care 2,399 children of whom 596 or 24 per cent were Negroes. In 1931, 27 per cent of the children under its care were Negroes. These figures should be considered in the light of the fact that in 1931 and 1932, approximately 20 per cent of all persons unemployed in the city were Negroes. (I.R.D.).

The picture presented here, of course, does not pretend to be complete. The physical and psychological consequences of unemployment have not even been mentioned since no studies were available which differentiated the two races. It is obvious that the Negroes as well as others suffered from undernourishment, ill health due to poverty and the makeshifts resulting from unemployment. The attitude of the wage-earner toward the family's predicament, the effect on his self-respect and self-reliance when continued seeking failed to materialize in work, the effect on the children and on the home atmosphere in general, on moral standards, etc., are not subject to generalization but there are, no doubt, thousands of instances where the resulting psychological strains have made living much more difficult, temporarily or permanently.

A presentation such as this does not permit of any clear-cut conclusions. Undoubtedly the Negroes of Philadelphia have suffered much distress, and relatively more severely than the whites. Differences of unemployment between white persons and Negroes can be attributed partly to the differences in their occupational and economic status. A study of the two groups of the same occupational status might throw more light on this question. The facts of recent increase in migration and the adaptation due to the newness of the industrial environment must also be credited with adding to the hardships and distress which unemployment brings to the Negro. And the prejudice against Negroes in certain occupations has also undoubtedly played its part.

## 33. SOME NEW FIELDS FOR NEGRO LABOR IN TEXAS

By  
Henry Allen Bullock<sup>24</sup>

For the past year, Texas reports a re-employment of 176,800 workers. Of these, 143,051 were employed by the C.W.A. Many are very optimistic concerning the outcome of labor in its relation to our National Recovery program. There are many who feel that these rapid strides toward reemployment are indications of permanent industrial recovery. However, in spite of this optimism, we are forced to admit the present inadequacy of our national re-employment program as a permanent good. There are several circumstances which tend to establish this viewpoint.

Much of our re-employment is the result of the operation of public projects which are to be completed shortly. These projects are designed to fulfill definite purposes, such as to build roads, to beautify cities, to construct buildings, etc., and when these purposes are fulfilled, the labor depending upon the project for employment will find itself unemployed. It is difficult to believe that this employment will be dependable and permanent, especially for the Negro, because it does not involve agriculture nor does it involve individual household servants. These occupational classes absorb a large amount of Negro labor. The question of the constitutionality of the NRA is ever being raised and unless individual states take the principles suggested in its codes and put them into laws, as has been true in some instances, its effectiveness will constantly diminish. Many agencies created by the national government for the purpose of increasing employment are manned by local politicians who are very unsympathetic toward Negro labor. This lack of sympathy is to be expected for they do not depend upon Negro votes for their political pre-eminence nor are they aware of the efficiency of Negro labor, since they are not often engaged in business which employs Negroes on a large scale.

Since the hopes of Negro workers are apparently staked on temporary public works projects and the National Recovery Administration, the influence of which does not reach the heart of Negro labor and the constitutionality of which is already being questioned, and since these national agencies are often manned by local politicians whose sympathy toward the Negro worker is almost nil, it seems that we should turn our attention toward more permanent and dependable sources of aid for Negro labor. The state appears to be a fruitful source. It can aid labor in a variety of ways. Through its governmental machinery, it can unquestionably modify industrial relations. It may possess opportunities unexplored and often has the facilities for training labor to meet these opportunities for Negro labor in Texas, it has been necessary to gather statistics concerning Negro employment and unemployment in Texas as revealed in the United States Census returns for 1930. The Texas Almanac has been used in order to get a true picture of the natural resources of the state, and questionnaires from 505 employers of 11,615 Negro laborers in the state have been received and analyzed. By means of these three sources of information, we shall suggest some new fields for Negro labor in Texas.

On the basis of the 1930 census report for Texas, there were 390,008 Negroes who constituted the gainfully employed. These Negro workers can be distributed as to occupational classes as follows:

<i>Occupational Classes</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Agriculture	42.9
Extraction of Minerals	0.4
Forestry and Fishing	0.5
Manufacturing	10.6
Transportation	6.6
Trade	4.0
Public Service	0.7
Professional Service	3.2
Domestic Service	27.8
Others	3.3
Total	100.0

From this tabulation we can see that over 70 per cent of the Negro Labor in Texas is concentrated in agriculture and domestic services. In the case of agriculture 74.4 per cent of these farmers are tenants and cotton growers. In the case of domestic services, 80.9 per cent are maids, cooks, chauffeurs, etc., serving for private families and only 3.2 per cent were found in laundries, cleaning and dying shops, and pressing shops. Even though the manufacturing and mechanical rate is barely over ten per cent, 38.5 per cent of these are concentrated in the building and saw-mill industries. As a result of this concentration, there are only 4.1 per cent in independent hand trades (such as, barbering, shoemaking, blacksmithing, etc.) 2.6 per cent in woodwork and furniture making, 2.7 per cent in automobile shops and 1.1 per cent in the paper and printing industry. There are tremendous degrees of negligence reflected in the above tabulation. Industrial groups such as extraction of minerals, forestry and fishing and public service do not involve two per cent of the Negro working population.

Since Negro labor is too heavily concentrated in some occupational classes such as cotton growing farmers, private domestic servants and building and saw mill laborers, and not heavily focused in others, it would seem to be a wise move to begin to direct Negro workers into these unexplored fields. Laundrying, cleaning and pressing, independent hand trades, woodwork and furniture making, operation of automobile shops, paper and printing industry, extraction of minerals, forestry and fishing appear to be desirable vocations for Negroes in Texas. These fields are suitable not only because they are not congested but because they meet very rigid industrial qualifications. They have suffered the least amount of unemployment during our economic crisis. The natural resources of the state and the industrial enterprises involving these industries can stand an employment increase at normal times and the employment managers representing these enterprises speak favorably of Negro labor.

When we study the occupational classes and their quantitative representation in relation to unemployment statistics, concentration and negligence in occupational distribution become significant. Though domestic service made up 27.8 per cent of the employed group it represented 38.8 per cent in the unemployed group. Most of this unemployment was found among those domestic servants who were employed by private families. One would expect this reaction in domestic service, for it has always been very sensitive to periods of business depression. When the family income is reduced considerably, one of the first reactions on the part of the housewife is to give up those phases of her household that are least necessary and most luxurious. A reduction in the number of personal servants is usually the first sacrificial step made. It is usually preceded by a reduction in wages and as the situation grows acute, wage reduction is followed by a decrease in the number of servants. Manufacturing and mechanical industries made up 10.6 per cent of the employed but 24.4 per cent of the unemployed. All of the independent hand trades referred to above involve less than one per cent of the unemployment suffered by these industries. Forestry, fishing, and extraction of minerals totaled only 40 instances of unemployment out of 2,793 cases of employment. Numerous oil wells, proximity to the sea and millions of board feet of standing timber greatly assure employment in these fields. According to the Texas Almanac for 1931, the various lumbering enterprises in the state spent an aggregated sum of \$42,000,000 on skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labor exclusively. This is a partial indication of the enormity of the lumbering business in a state ranked as the seventh largest lumbering area in the Union. This gigantic business is located in East Texas where over 75 per cent of the Negro population lives.

The depression of agricultural commodities has caused a depression in the value of land. Acreage for farm use can be purchased now at a very moderate rate. The fertility of the soil and the low cost of the land make the cost of operating a farm in Texas much lower than the cost of operation in many other southern states. Negro farmers are far from exhausting the possibilities of Texas agriculture. Therefore, a considerable modification and redistribution of interests are necessary. Here, Negro agriculture must acquire a less burdensome age. The age distribution for the Negro farm-population is between 35 and 64; 38 per cent are between the ages of one year and 14 years, and 3.1 per cent are over 64 years of age. These facts suggest that the Negro farm-population of Texas is extremely old and extremely young. A redistribution of interest in types of agricultural commodities is in order. Of all the Negro farmers in the state, only 1.1 per cent are engaged in the production of goods other than cotton crop. Of course Texas is dominantly a cotton state but other types of commodities

are being grown with a relatively small cost of production. There are some instances in which Negro farmers are beginning commercial poultry, fruit-growing and truck farming. Most of those responsible for this change are farm owners. This change is almost equally as possible among tenants as among owners, for many tenants rent on a cash basis and therefore have the right to determine their own crop. Many share croppers can receive aid from local banks and their landlords provided they mortgage their livestock, where the bank is concerned, and their products where the landlord is concerned.

Many employers have revealed very wholesome attitudes toward Negro labor. The following list shows the occupational distribution of the majority of the questionnaires:

Occupational Classes	No. of Employees
Forestry, fishing and extraction of minerals	37
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	328
Domestic and personal service	121
Others (not included in this treatise)	19
Total	505

Of those employers represented in the above tabulation, 86.2 per cent were willing to employ workers on the basis of merit rather than on the basis of race. Of this group so represented, 15.3 per cent were from the manufacturing and mechanical industries, 56.2 per cent were from domestic services (such as laundries, cleaning and pressing shops, etc.) 28.5 per cent from forestry, fishing and the extraction of minerals. Some of these employers preferred Negroes because of the efficiency of those whom they had already employed and because they had vainly tried all but Negro workers. Those who objected to Negro labor did so on the grounds of inefficiency; inefficiency as reflected in technical training, punctuality and dependability. Most of these employers, 75.3 per cent, appear determined to maintain and improve the efficiency of their labor for they are exacting technical training which their workers do not possess. Sixty-five per cent required that this training be done by apprenticeship.

In conclusion, we may say that the National Recovery program is not a very dependable source of permanent adjustment for Negro labor and therefore, it is necessary for us to find another way out. In Texas there are many unexplored labor opportunities. The existence of these opportunities is made certain by the fact that there are some fields of "normal-time" employment which are not very crowded and do not suffer heavily the shock of unemployment. The natural and industrial resources of the state can normally take an increase and the employer himself, on the whole, expresses satisfaction with Negro labor and a willingness to accept an increase under normal conditions.

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#### 34. A WAGE DIFFERENTIAL BASED ON RACE

By Robert C. Weaver<sup>25</sup>

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*The Crisis*, 41 (August, 1934): 236, 238.

35. BLACK WAGES FOR BLACK MEN

By Ira De A. Reid

One may safely give long odds that when the Economic Fathers set out to establish the present machinery for industrial recovery they had not the slightest idea that they would meet such a problem as that of a wage differential based upon race. Nevertheless, the Labor Advisory Board and its economic technicians have found themselves facing a most complicated array of statistics, inferences and assumptions of Southern industrialists, proving that it is both necessary and expedient to permit a differential wage for Negro workers. If



this is not permitted, say the employers, they perish. Since the objective of the NRA is the stimulation of productive enterprises, the advisers found themselves in an abyss between the Scylla of permitting a racial differential in violation of the minimum wage agreement and economic theory, and the Charybdis of restricting and delimiting industry by placing upon the employer wage costs that he believed excessive.

Caught in this passage is the Negro worker, muttering the moral of Alice in Wonderland's Duchess, "Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise." He has been told that if he does not accept a lower wage, he will have no job. Are not millions of white workers unemployed? He has also been told that the acceptance of a sub-wage brands him as inferior en masse to the white workers, demanding a complete about-face in the fight for industrial equality that he has been waging for seventy years. But, when in addition, he is counselled, by such a sage of racial adjustment as Kelly Miller, to throw his lot with Capital, the Capital offers him a sub-minimum wage, he not only mutters a Duchess-like dictum, but resigns himself to what apparently seems a hopeless situation. This situation is best described as a common law under which Negro workers--unskilled, skilled, and professional in private and public affairs, in communities where they form a large percentage of the working population, and in occupations they have a majority of the total workers--are paid a lower wage than white workers performing the same type of work. The current question is, in view of the fact that all of the southern states sanction a lower wage for Negro workers as school teachers and other public employees, should this differential be given the legal sanction and approval of the recovery machinery of the Federal Government?

Though differential wages for Negroes are more pronounced in the South, they are frequently found in Northern areas. The methods for determining this differential vary. According to Feldman, they are limited only by the range of human ingenuity. Such methods are both direct and indirect. The direct method is the one now causing chief concern in the emergency legislation. It is a process whereby Negro workers are automatically classed as "sub-standard" or "sub-normal" workers and are given an initial wage lower than that prescribed by industrial codes or professional standards. The indirect methods include such devices as changing the title of an occupation while authorizing the same manipulative performance as existed in a higher classified occupation for which there was a higher wage; distributing Negro workers in piece-rate occupations for which the rate of pay is lower than that on which white workers are employed; and unequally distributing the over-time work to the disadvantage of the Negro worker.

In general, the payment of a lower wage to Negro workers is a parallel to the former employers' device of angling for cheap labor among immigrant populations. The factors that enter into determining this differential are not alone economic, but are social and political limitations of a so-called free competition. Thus, in the loosely organized industrial areas of the South, particularly in many small enterprises and frequently in larger one, the employer dictates what the wage shall be. There is no better example of this than the situation recently brought to light in Selma, Alabama, where an employer was induced to establish his burlap bag making company in that community with the following concessions: exemption from taxation, guaranteed non-unionized labor, guaranteed cheap labor at his own price and the delivery of cotton to his plant without paying freight.

This factor and the element of custom play a very important part in the present controversy over differential wages. A *New York Times* correspondent well expresses the point of view in the South in this respect. In a communication of September 10, 1933, Julian Harris writes that many white Southerners believe that a sane solution is a differential. As the South had become accustomed to a lower wage for white women than for white men, and since a similar differential for black men and white men had existed for so many years, it would be unwise to make a change as sweeping as that inaugurated under the Blue Eagle. Many believe that the Southern wage differential is all that keeps the Southern manufacturer in competition. However, "None asserts that such a condition represents justice, but is a course which, according to many, wisdom seems to dictate." Thus, the dictates of custom noticeable in this situation are part of the same set of conditions that created and perpetuated Negro jobs for which there was a lower wage scale as well as an insignificant amount of occupational prestige.

Organized labor, also, has contributed its share in the establishment of the race differential. The working class philosophy in such instances has been for the white workers. In Charleston, South Carolina, for example, where Negro building tradesmen were largely organized ten years ago, these Negro artisans worked at a lower scale than the white workers although they belonged to the same unions as their fellow-unionists. Separate unions for whites and blacks in other Southern cities likewise promoted a differential wage in favor of the white worker. In such cities as Jacksonville, Florida, and Birmingham, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana, (where there were two central labor bodies, one for whites, the other for Negroes) the ill-effects of such duplicity in labor's aims have been most pronounced.

The extemporaneous arguments mouthed by employers for giving Negroes a lower wage rate vary from such statements as "They don't need any more, and they don't expect any more" to arguments purporting that "Negroes are naturally untrustworthy, inclined to be lazy, and usually very slow."

In addition, the following arguments have been advanced in substantiation of a differential wage for Negroes: (1) the Negro's standard of living is lower and he gets along on less. (This argument limits wages to a subsistence level and argues that the *plane* of living of Negroes is the standard whereby they live without realizing that, in the main, this group of workers has been compelled to live on that plane); (2) the Negro has fewer economic responsibilities and, therefore, requires a smaller wage. (It is on this basis that the wage paid to Negroes more nearly approximates that which might be given to an unmarried man, despite the fact that the Negro family of the South is relatively larger in urban areas than is the white family); (3) Negroes are engaged on processes requiring little skill, and are, therefore, worth no more than they receive. (This argument does not take into consideration the fact that Negroes are not permitted to work in very many skilled occupations. Furthermore, being individual bargainers, they are unable to give voice to their opinions as to the worth of their services.); (4) Negroes are a temporary factor in the labor supply and are, therefore, paid lower wages to make up the employer's costs of replacement. (This is a very fundamental factor in the labor situation, as the Negro worker is constantly threatened with elimination from industry if he insists upon so-called "normal" standards); (5) the Negro worker, instead of having particularly quick motor-reaction or unusual manipulative deftness and quickness of vision is phlegmatic, dull-witted and slow. (The greatest credence that can be given to this assumption, according to psychologists and anthropologists, is that these opinions are based upon hastily drawn generalizations and should be treated with skepticism; furthermore, that there is a very slight difference in the fundamental qualities of races independent of cultural background, training, etc.); (6) the Negro worker is worth less to an employer. (This fact is more largely a social factor than an economic one. The position of the Negro in the community does not permit, says the employer, his promotion on the basis of experience and he, therefore, does not become a valuable addition to the working personnel); (7) the Negro is adversely affected by inadequate earnings. (This is another method of interpreting the social and cultural inferiority of the Negro, and is based upon the assumption that the Negro requires less to live than does the white worker); (8) the payment of equal wages to Negroes would mean the establishment of social equality. (This argument is closely related to the racial stratification of occupations as it existed in the South of wages); (9) the payment of an equal wage for Negroes and whites in the South would cause the displacement of many Negroes by whites and the promotion of racial conflicts. (As this would be a distinct departure from the traditional method of handling black and white labor problems in the South, it is not to be doubted that there would arise specific instances where Negroes would be displaced by white workers. Also, it cannot be overlooked that there might be a possibility for increased racial conflict. However, the injustices in a differential of this sort have been so outspokenly denounced by certain prominent newspapers of the South that the possibilities for violence have been decidedly diminished since the summer of 1933).

The arguments against a differential wage for Negroes are, of course, based upon the fact that the Negro is an integral part of the American labor population and stratifying his marginal position with a codified scale below that of the white worker would automatically adversely affect the wage status of the majority group.

Advocates of the equal pay for equal work theory maintain that in view of

the reasons advanced by employers for a differential wage, (1) the difference in wage costs should be made a fixed charge against the competition of other industries; (2) the payment of equal wages would standardize wages and check the unscrupulous acts of employers who permit low labor charges to offset inefficient management; (3) the elimination of a differential wage would result in the levelling of wages for the whole working population and would check petty abuses in many industries; (4) equal wages would end the subsidizing of inefficient management and antiquated methods of many industries at the expense of Negro employees; (5) equal wages would result in the displacement of many unemployables--unemployables being determined not so much by race as by industrial efficiency; (6) equal wages would protect the white worker against under-bidding in the labor market; (7) the elimination of the differential would, in part, compensate for the restrictions on promotions which adversely affect Negroes in industry.

It is a strong belief that the differential wage is a very pertinent part of the wage system whereby the workers' share is determined by the rule of thumb bargain. Under such a system, neither the employer nor the employee is certain that he is getting a fair deal. Many of the reasons that employers give justifying a racial differential, however, are due to faulty labor control, inadequate labor management and inadequate and improper rate-setting rather than to racial differences.

The much talked of productive ability of white and Negro workers has not been sufficiently authenticated by scientific studies. It is certain that there should be a study of the capacity of Negro and white racial groups--a capacity not vitiated by various differences in cultural background and opportunity. One of the most recent and most outstanding studies of this relative ability was made by Alma Herbst. This study showed that the "earning capacity of colored groups as demonstrated by weekly earnings and premiums, though far from conclusive, rules out the assumption of their (the Negroes') lack of ability and industrial efficiency as the only explanation of their status and rates of pay." On the question of labor mobility, Miss Herbst concludes that the "shiftlessness and unreliability of individual colored workmen have not been conclusively demonstrated." It was also found, in an analysis of the earnings of Negro and white employees in a typical meat packing establishment between 1922 and 1926, that under the Bedoux Premium System of Wage Payment, affecting 617 employees of whom 502 were white and 115 Negroes, 20.3 per cent of the whites earned no bonus while all of the Negroes earned some bonus. Furthermore, of those earning a bonus, 45.8 per cent of the whites and 42.6 per cent of the Negroes earned the lowest bonus; while 22.1 per cent of the whites and 26.1 per cent of the Negroes earned the highest amount available under the system.

Enforcement of the equal minimum wage for whites and blacks in the South is going to face several stumbling blocks. Will a local compliance board be able to enforce the law in a community where a Negro teacher has to teach forty years before she receives the salary that a white teacher receives in her first year? How enthusiastic will any community be to so completely alter a wage policy that heretofore has paid Negro public professional employees a salary ranging from fifty to seventy per cent of that paid to white employees in the same occupation?

All Southern employers are not desirous of paying Negroes a wage lower than that paid to whites. There are a few who are convinced of the economic necessity of paying equal wages in the local market. A few pay it. Many more would, did they not fear the reaction of their competitors. According to one observer, there are other employers political-party-loyal to the core who will do "whatever seems necessary to make the party's program a success and keep it in power." Other employers have increased Negro workers' wages to an amount just below the standard minimum set either by the blanket agreement or the individual code. All in all, the majority believe that there must be a differential.

Occasionally, there comes a voice of conviction that seeks to alter this point of view. There is the editor of the *Macon (Ga.) Telegraph* (a daily that increased its annual income from Negro subscribers from \$2,700 twenty years ago to \$45,000 in 1932 exclusive of "the additional advertising from national accounts that were brought in by the increased subscriptions") who wanted higher wages for Negroes "Not so much for the benefit of the Negro, as we have said a thousand times, but for the benefit of Macon and Georgia. If his

earnings are increased, he becomes a buyer of advertised goods, and Macon rates accordingly . . . and Telegraph prospers accordingly. . . . We are selfish in it. It's good business to uncover these acres of diamonds at our own door-step." And, this type of argument will fall upon more receptive ears than any other.<sup>26</sup>

But what of the Negro workers? Forsooth, they really do not want a differential, but many of them have subscribed to and accepted a lower wage, for they have been made to believe that pursuing such a course will insure them permanent jobs. Yet, witness this anomaly. In one Southern community where the lower wage for Negroes is a reality, certain Negro leaders advocated publicly and privately for the differential. The ire of the Negro community was so aroused, that the Negro leader of this movement was forced to have his life and home guarded by white policemen. However, the same Negro community never said "a mumbling word" a few months earlier when a Negro minister, the leading advocate of equal pay for Negroes, was driven from the city because of his views.

Job-conscious on the one hand and skeptical of the success of Federal administration on the other, the Negro employees in the South, according to the Southern Field Secretary of the National Urban League, "Have very grave doubts as to the ability of the Federal Government to compel compliance with the code." They know how deliberately public policy in the South completely disregards the provisions of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Federal Constitution. They feel that if the government is powerless to enforce the provisions of these measures, it will be equally as powerless to enforce the provisions of the codes. They accept the language of the codes quite the same as they do the statements with reference to equal accommodations on railroads, and 'separate but equal' educational equipment in the public school system. Hence, they are more concerned over displacement by white workers and no wage, than over a minimum wage with its discriminatory racial differential. And so long as they are, they will have jobs--at least, that's what their present employers say.

*Opportunity*, 12 (March, 1934): 73-76.

### 36. THE NEGRO IN INDUSTRY AND IN URBAN LIFE

By Eugene Kinckle Jones

Civilization was many thousands of years old before the importance of fresh air, pure water supply, balanced diets, wholesome recreation, periodic medical examinations, and isolation of persons afflicted with communicable diseases was fully recognized in the matter of personal and public health. Civilization will be many, many years older before it realizes that human progress in social and economic affairs cannot be realized fully for strong majorities without guaranteeing to all inhabitants of given areas full benefits of liberalized laws and customs.

The Negro in American life represents a weak minority--first enslaved, then freed constitutionally after prolonged suffering and disastrous consequences resulting from a war between representatives of the strong majority; then discriminated against politically, socially, and economically in the development of a class-controlled, profit-mad, caste system which in 1929 collapsed. Bewildered, hoping against fate, floundering, desperate, then almost chaotic, a country which has prided itself on its sound financial institutions, its unlimited economic resources, its democratic political institutions passes through a bloodless political revolution, changes completely its partisanly political alignments and begins experimenting on a new philosophy of relationships between the various elements making-up our heterogeneous population.

The rights of industry, labor, and the consumer in their relations to each other and to those within each class are to be preserved. The farmer, the home-maker, the student, the teacher, the artisan--all are to be protected fully and their interests are so to be conserved and promoted that prosperity

(whatever that means to the citizens of democratic America) is to be vouchsafed to all under the shibboleth of the New Deal.

The acid test, the unerring barometer of effective political, social and economic philosophies and practices in America is the Negro. When Negroes began to secure work during the unemployment period in the beginning of the World War, it predicted an early return of the bonanza period of expanding business, plentiful employment, and high wages. When Negroes began to lose employment by the hundreds and thousands after the Wall Street debacle Negro leaders were already predicting the depression which almost immediately followed (the Negroes were the "first to be fired"). As long as the Negro is underpaid, exploited, disfranchised, brutalized in the South, the South remains the poorest, the most illiterate, the most backward section of the nation. When Negroes are lynched, burned at the stake, mobbed, it is inevitably the introduction of mores which prompt enraged citizens to take the law into their hands and wreak vengeance against any person charged with crime, regardless of race.<sup>27</sup>

I shall summarize briefly the industrial status of the Negro and some of his urban problems which must be adjusted with the other social and economic problems of the American scene.

Negroes constitute 9.7 per cent of the population. They are 43.7 per cent urban. Of all urban Negroes 70.4 per cent live in metropolitan areas; 55.5 per cent of all metropolitan area Negroes are in nine northern such areas--2,033,203. There are seven cities with more than 100,000 Negroes: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, New Orleans, and Detroit, ranking in the order named.

Negroes are 11.3 per cent of all workers, although 9.7 per cent of all the inhabitants. In transportation and mining his proportion of workers is being maintained only in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, however. He is over-concentrated in agriculture and personal and domestic service. His professional group,--teachers, physicians, nurses, dentists, lawyers, and clergymen--has increased--only his physicians at a less rapid rate than his population.

Approximately one-fourth of all women fifteen years of age and over are workers; about one-half of all Negro women are gainfully employed. Negro married women form one-fourth of all married women working away from home, the ratio being about three times greater than that of all women. Over one-third (36 per cent) of the child-labor in America is Negro.

One of the most unfortunate phases of the whole industrial picture so far as Negro workers are concerned is the attitude and practice of organized labor in matters interracial. There are nineteen national and international labor organizations which forbid Negro membership either through their constitutions or through rituals. There are under normal conditions approximately 90,000 Negro members of labor organizations. According to their proportions of workers in fields already organized, the number should be 300,000. One-sixth of the Negro members are in independent Negro locals--separate because of the refusal of white locals to have mixed membership. This situation warrants close watching as the feudal authorities insist in the adoption of codes of fair competition and the rights of workers to bargain collectively with their employers in the matter of wages and hours. How will the rights of Negro workers be preserved? Will our federal authorities also insist on there being no color line in the labor organizations which treat the employers?

Negro business before the depression was showing distinct gains in those fields in which the Negro businessman was not faced too directly with chain store and mail-order house competition and the price cutting practices of the large business concerns. In the retailing of foods, restaurants, grocery stores, etc., is found 42 per cent of all retail business among Negroes. The Negro drug store is the most successful in his small business enterprises. The Negro banking and insurance represents about the most successful business venture of the Negro middle-class. Banking suffered severe losses during the period since 1929. Industrial loans are the chief fields of banking operation. Their most useful service has been in promoting thrift and home-ownership.

Negro life insurance operations have had serious set-backs also. In 1930 at a meeting of the National Negro Insurance Association 21 member companies reported \$260,175,000 of insurance in force. Since that time there has been a decided reduction in this total, lapsed policies as well as decreased increment of new business being the cause. Impaired mortgages and other

assets of the companies and the sharp competition of white insurance companies seeking Negro business have had their influence on the stability of the Negro insurance company.

The health, the housing conditions, and other social conditions of the Negro generally during the depression have kept pace with the general trend in these fields along with the population as a whole--except that as always the racial elements involved due to prejudice and lack of acquaintance and understanding on the part of those in authority have accentuated the difficulties under which Negroes attempt to make helpful adjustments. The Negro death rate has declined with the white death rate, one of the paradoxes of the depression period.

Negro housing is a distinct problem because the Negro population usually is drawn into the most deteriorated residential sections of cities. Property values usually depreciate partly for economic and partly for psychological reasons. Restrictive compacts and covenants tend to limit areas of Negro residence thus encouraging and often enforcing overcrowding. The limiting of facilities for financing Negro home ownership, increased rentals, and neglect by municipal authorities of the enforcement of health and sanitary laws in Negro neighborhoods all contribute towards making his poor housing conditions worse. Little or no slum clearance projects have thus far been placed in operation on behalf of the urban Negro and no Subsistence Homestead plan has as yet been definitely adopted in which Negro industrial workers may be assured of participation, although, admittedly many proposed projects contemplating Negro inclusion have been discussed.

Delinquency, juvenile and adult, is on the increase for Negroes in cities, as is true with whites. And unfortunately leisure time and recreational activities for Negroes not only have not increased, but have a tendency to be curtailed due to reduction in the budgets of those private social agencies under which such programs are in the main fostered.

What is the situation today in regard to the urban Negroes' effort to fit into the national recovery program and what are the prospects of success?

The National Industrial Recovery Act has as its purpose the serving of the people by increasing business, spreading employment, and creating such a flow of money that all of the citizens of the country will profit. Unquestionably there was no desire on the part of the framers of the Act or those who were selected to put it into execution to exclude the Negro from its benefits. However, the Negro's very status itself affected him adversely in the operation of the Act. Negroes are not employed in large numbers in those industries directly affected by the codes. Differentials in wages to the disadvantage of the Negro which have been so generally discussed in Negro circles were already in vogue throughout the South and in most sections of the North before the depression. Negroes have not been acquainted with the sources to which they might turn for aid, many of the projects and programs of relief having been established and in actual operation before Negroes even knew where to apply.

This was due in large measure to lack of organization among Negroes and also to the fact that leading Negroes were not selected as members of planning or policy-making boards and committees. The local authorities selected to administer the programs often were ignorant of the Negroes plight, were not interested in Negroes, or were prejudiced against them. Organized labor, which has been recognized as never before by the NRA in its fight for a fair wage and reasonable hours, has proverbially been neglectful of the rights of Negro workers. This situation possibly is the greatest menace to the ultimate participation of Negroes in the fruits of the recovery program, for without the Negro being welcome to the rights of organized labor his chance to advance in the occupational scale is lost.

Prejudice has been most pronounced in the displacement of Negroes by white workers when the wages accorded Negroes under the NRA are equal to those received by whites. Displacements have not been as numerous as rumors would indicate, but violations of the code wages have been more frequent, Negroes receiving lower wages under threats of removal or personal violence, and intimidated to the point where they asserted that they were receiving the code wage although they actually received much less. In many cases, checks for feed, seed, and fertilizer loans drawn to the order of Negroes have been cashed by white land-owners or holders of mortgages on the property of Negroes, who actually received but a small part, if any, of Government funds.

While this picture is a sad one, there is a brighter side. Many private organizations such as the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Joint Committee on Recovery, the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association, and many local movements among Negroes, as well as a number of liberal white organizations, have made constant protest against discrimination. Although many whites and some Negro leaders have argued for a differential in wages for Negroes on the ground that this was the only way to assure the continuance of Negroes in jobs, the arguments that have been advanced *against* differentials have been more potent and are having their effect in economic thinking. If out of the collapse of our economic system there is to come regimentation of industry, a more equitable distribution of wealth, and a guarantee of employment at reasonable wages and hours for all workers, it is necessary that all workers should share alike in performing like services. The principle of the differential wage should not be permitted to become an established, accepted, approved, legal reality. It might become a precedent engrafted in the nation's social consciousness for permanent adoption. This situation alone would be provocative of intense racial misunderstanding and friction. Employers would not be able to resist the temptation to exploit the Negro worker and through him to exploit the white worker. We would have a continuation of the lower standard of living among Negroes which would in turn have its effect, as in the past, on the standard of living of white workers, especially those residing in the South. There is only one real basis on which a wage differential might be established and that is on the matter of relative efficiency between white and Negro workers. Thus far no scientific evidence has been forthcoming to indicate that there is any difference, under normal conditions, in the efficiency of white and black workers in any given field. I dare say there never will be.

If white workers are to be protected in their struggle for the rights of men who toil, there must be equal protection for all of the workers of every minority group in our land and towards this end we must work. The Government recognizes the importance of this argument in stating in the very Act creating the recovery program that there shall be no distinction made on account of race or color, creed or politics. In the selection of economists of the most liberal views and possessed of human understanding, our President and cabinet officers chosen by him have assured themselves of the presence in high administrative positions of persons who but need to have the plight of the Negro brought to their attention to enlist their sympathy and their aid. The experience of all who work with administrators and executives in Washington points to the universal conclusion that at least those in authority are well disposed towards the Negro.

Conferences of Negro leaders or of sympathetic whites with Negroes have been called in the Department of Commerce, with the Subsistence Homestead staff, and with the staff of the Labor Advisory Board of the NRA. The Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor has had a conference on the care of dependent and neglected children to which persons representing the interest of Negro children were invited. Representatives have pleaded the cause of the Negro at many of the code hearings, and an inter-departmental conference group has been brought together representing all of the various departments and emergency administrations, to meet monthly for the present, to discuss means by which these various departments and administrations may more effectively handle problems affecting Negro citizens. The NRA has had several investigations made of displacements of Negroes and of means by which the rights of Negroes may be protected.

In the final analysis America herself is on trial. If the experiment of the "New Deal" is to be successful, will it be possible for America to ignore the rights of the Negro for her own welfare? Negroes are still concentrated in the South. Sentimentally and actually the South will still be palliated as has been the custom ever since the Civil War was won on the field by the North. The Union was preserved but on the race question the South has never been conquered. The cost of segregating and of desocializing the Negro has been too great and the South, after all, has been the chief sufferer. The poor whites of the South will remain poor as long as the Negro is kept poor. Lifting the South up to the northern and western economic and social standards, with the Negro segregated and economically debauched, will be too costly to the controlling white majority for them to vouchsafe economic security to the masses of the whites themselves.

The only way out is to lift the economic and social status of the Negroes along with that of the masses of the whites so that the purchasing power of all of the workers of the South will be at such a point that the modified profit system may be continued under a plan calling for a greater and a wider distribution of our national wealth. It must mean a higher wage scale, improved civic life, and better educational facilities for all. If recovery means a new social order this is unavoidable. This must obtain for the teeming masses of the North, the South, the East, and the West. It is for those who control our political, our social, and our economic destiny to give the answer for America. The people are ready to follow but they must be led in the right direction.

*Opportunity*, 12 (May, 1934): 141-44.

### 37. THE NEGRO WORKER AND THE NRA

By Gustav Peck<sup>28</sup>

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*The Crisis*, 41 (September, 1934): 262-63, 279.

38. NRA CODIFIES WAGE SLAVERY

By John P. Davis<sup>29</sup>

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*The Crisis*, 41 (October, 1934): 298-99, 304.

### 39. NATIONAL RECOVERY ACT IN U.S.A. MEANS NEGRO REPRESSIVE ACT

By B. D. Amis

The outstanding piece of work in 1933 in the sight of American capitalism is the contribution of the Roosevelt administration. This "gift" (burden and yoke of oppression) to the poverty stricken toilers of America was the "New Deal" program which introduced the widely heralded National Recovery Act.

The NRA promised to improve the living conditions of all by introducing fair competition labor codes which would open up employment, thereby increasing the purchasing power of the masses and help capitalism to get out of its crisis. Although there was a temporary pick up in the employment, the material conditions of the workers were not bettered to any marked extent. The fact that a new wave of strike struggle and demonstrations demanding the right to organize, wage increases against terror, etc., after the codes went into operation, is sufficient proof that the standard of living condition was not raised.

The Negro workers and toilers are the worse sufferers under the NRA. Over 3,000,000 Negroes, (domestics, farm workers, and laborers) are excluded from its labor codes which are to regulate wages in all industries, to increase the buying power, and do away with much unemployment. Wherever wage rates are provided for Negroes in the codes, the differentials is from 25% to 50% lower than the wages given to white workers in the same industry. And in industries where formally there were uniform wages for Negro and white workers, the employers have replaced Negro labor with that of white labor, rather than pay the same wages under the NRA. Many of the employers not only have suggested dual wage scales, but in practice pay the Negroes much less than the whites under NRA protection.

The wages of Negro workers show no increase under the codes. In the south domestic workers receive from \$1.50 to \$3.00 a week. The Negro employees of the Federal Barge Line operated by the War Department, went on strike in August against rotten working conditions. These men worked from 12 to 15 hours a day but received pay for only two hours work. The NRA labor board refused to listen to their demands. But the officials of the company called the police to break the strike. In the textile industry of the south, white workers receive the minimum code rate of \$13.00 a week, but the Negro workers are paid as low as \$4.00 a week. In the lumber industry the disparity between the wages

of the northern worker and the Negro of the south is very great. Frances Perkins, secretary of labor in the Roosevelt cabinet, in defending the discriminatory practices of the NRA stated that the low wage rates in the southern districts is based upon the predominance of Negro labor. The rates here are 25 and 27 cents an hour.

Many of the codes in order not to make provisions for wage rates for the Negro, do not classify the work done by the Negro, but exclude it. Consequently, the white employer exploits more cheap Negro labor.

At the same time that the low level living conditions of the Negroes are being attacked by the NRA, lynchings are increasing. Over 40 were lynched in the first year of the Roosevelt "New Deal."

Mass indignation against the NRA and Negro oppression is developing rapidly. Protest movements, joint actions of Negro and white workers in strikes, and unemployed demonstrations, under militant working class leadership, are arousing the consciousness of the Negro masses that the NRA will not concede them anything, but that they must struggle jointly with the struggling white workers.

The barbarous organized new wave of lynchings by the courts and gangs calls for mass resistance. The struggle against the worsening of the low level living conditions is the united front joint struggle of Negro and white workers.

The League of Struggle for Negro Rights at its regional conference in Baltimore, issued a call for a nation-wide drive against lynchings and Negro oppression. Only a powerful mass movement and the organized strength of the indignant Negro masses is necessary to stop the vicious attacks of the NRA. This organized movement must contain in the forefront Negro and white workers who struggle together with the Negro people for equal rights, for self-determination for complete emancipation. NRA to the Negro people means NO RIGHTS AT ALL--NEGRO REPRESSIVE ACT. It is another link in the continuous chain of persecution of the Negro masses and the denial to them of their democratic rights. It is glorified and defended by the enemies to the Negro liberation movement. To struggle against the NRA means to struggle to defeat the misleaders and NRA agents among the Negro people, it is struggle against the imperialist oppressors of the working class and the Negro people.

*The Negro Worker*, 4 (April-May, 1934): 17-18.

#### 40. A BLACK INVENTORY OF THE NEW DEAL

By John P. Davis

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*The Crisis*, 42 (May, 1935): 141-42, 154-55.

41. TO BOYCOTT OR--NOT TO BOYCOTT

A. We Must Have Jobs

By Vere E. Johns

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*The Crisis*, 41 (September, 1934): 258-60, 274.

42. THE NEGRO IN PITTSBURGH'S INDUSTRIES

By R. Maurice Moss

The Depression came late to Pittsburgh. Months after many other communities were suffering from the disruption of our industrial machine, the Pittsburgh district which supplies the nation's heavy machinery and the coal to operate it, the steel for buildings and the glass to fill their windows, and the electric equipment of a thousand varieties, still found smoke pouring from its myriad stacks and its retail balance sheets showing but a small reduction in business.

But when these other communities found themselves unable to buy even the necessities of life, let alone the equipment for new buildings and enterprises, the blow fell heavily on the Smoky City and its environs. Mining was curtailed, mills closed down, and the business houses discharged their forces. In May of 1933 one of every four of Allegheny County's workers found his name on the lists for relief. This same list contained the name of one of every two Negro workers.

The big steel and coal concerns established their own relief organizations and Negro and white employees who were laid off fared alike in the distribution of food orders, clothing, etc. Meager as were these grants, they marked a recognition, on the part of the employing group that the Negro was a valuable and necessary part of these firms' working forces, and that they expected, once the depression passed, to utilize again these black workers whom they had induced to desert their southern farms to man furnaces and dig coal in Allegheny

County--"the world's workshop."

Within the past year the wheels of industry began again to turn--slowly, unsteadily--but they began to turn again. What then of the black worker who in the past two decades had made himself so much a part of Pittsburgh's working force? Or had he made himself so much a part of that working force as we tried to believe? How many had advanced to skilled work? How many were now supervising the work of others? What fields offered new avenues for employment?

It was to answer these, and other questions that the Pittsburgh Urban League undertook a series of the Negro workers. These studies, designed to secure a "spot-picture" of the Pittsburgh Negro's present and possible immediate future place in its industrial scheme, are to cover at least the following:

1. The Negro in Pittsburgh's Larger Industries;
2. The Negro in Pittsburgh's Retail Establishments;
3. The Negro in the Domestic Service Field;
4. The Negro and Organized Labor;
5. The Negro in Professional and Government Employ

These studies are sponsored jointly by the Urban League of Pittsburgh and the local Federal-State Employment Office under the joint direction of Dr. Francis D. Tyson and R. Maurice Moss. The field work staff has been furnished by the Work Relief Administration. To date studies 1 and 2 have been completed and work is now under way on numbers 3 and 4.

*Study 1--The Negro in Pittsburgh's Larger Industries* covered the 731 largest industrial and commercial firms in the whole of Allegheny County. All firms were covered, whether they employed any Negroes or not. The highest official that could be reached in each firm was interviewed and the figures obtained were, in the vast majority of cases, from actual payrolls. The employers were remarkably cooperative, as is indicated both by the fact that in only three cases were the interviewers refused the information sought and by the frankness of the replies to questions.

It should be borne in mind that the figures cover Allegheny County *only*. This is important because some of the largest of the employers of labor whose home offices are in Pittsburgh, operate factories, or mines, outside this City or County. For example, the Pittsburgh Plate Glass plant at Ford City, Pa., in which scores of Negroes are employed, is outside this County. Thus, only the employees at the company's Pittsburgh office and warehouse would be in our present picture.

The 731 firms covered in the study employed at the time of the interviews 152,295 persons, of whom 10,821 were Negroes. In 1930 the United States Census reported approximately 547,000 potential workers, ten years of age and over, in Allegheny County, of whom about 39,000 were Negroes. The survey thus covers about 28 per cent of all the potential workers and about 27 per cent of the potential Negro workers.

But the Pittsburgh Bureau of Social Research estimates that on April 1, 1934 (the central date of the study) approximately 390,000 persons were actually employed, full or part-time in the County. In this case the coverage would be 38 per cent of the actual workers. Assuming that Negroes have been displaced in no greater percentage than the workers of other races, there would have been 28,500 Negroes at work on April 1st. The total of 10,821 would be 36 per cent of the actual employed Negroes. While these figures are estimates, it would appear that the study covered one-third of all the Negroes actually at work in the County at the time it was made. However, it should be borne in mind that the study did not include:

- (a) Negroes in domestic and personal service (save those employed in certain classifications by hotels) in which lines of work the vast majority of the Negro women workers of the County are to be found.
- (b) The Negro professional group (save two Negro physicians on the staff of one hospital).
- (c) The Negro in the employ of the local, State, or Federal government (which, at the moment, would have included several hundred on CWA work projects).

- (d) The Negro who works independently (store-keepers, peddlers, etc.).
- (e) Negroes who work for other Negroes (since no Negro firm was large enough to be included in the firms covered).

When these factors are considered it will be apparent that the coverage of the Negro worker as employed by the large local industries was far above the 36 per cent. Two estimates, made independently, have placed the actual coverage at approximately 70 to 75 per cent. Certainly the coverage was sufficiently high to make possible the drawing of accurate and valid conclusions.

*Where the Negro Works: By Types of Firms:* (excluding, for the moment, firms not employing any Negroes)

	Total Employees	Negro Employees	Per cent Negro is of total	Per cent of Negroes in each class
Builders' supplies	645	75	11.62	.69
Building construction	459	67	14.59	.61
Domestic (hotels, etc.)	4,248	1,235	29.07	11.42
Education (janitors, not teachers)	1,216	74	6.08	.69
Manufacturing	81,642	6,055	7.41	55.96
Mining	10,712	1,949	18.19	18.01
Printing, Publishing	2,397	24	1.00	.22
Professional (hospitals, etc.)	929	130	13.99	1.21
Trade	17,445	806	4.62	7.44
Transportation	11,237	406	3.61	3.75
Totals	130,930	10,821	8.25	100.00

*What the Negro Worker Does:*

	Male	Female	Total
Supervisory work	11	0	11
Professional and clerical	7	1	8
Skilled work	77	0	77
Semi-skilled	737	90	827
Common labor	9,443	455	9,898
Totals	10,275	546	10,821

*Wages Received:*

Practically all of the firms covered were operating under NRA codes. Not a single instance of differential in pay on the basis of race was reported. But the vast majority of the Negro workers, as may be seen by the above table, found themselves in the types of work, or on those processes, which pay the minimum under the codes. The highest paid Negro employee reported upon received \$236.00 per month; the next highest received \$180.00. The bus companies hire Negroes as porters on tips only. They reported an average income of but \$5.00 to \$6.00 per week.

The total weekly payroll for these 10,821 Negroes would not exceed \$200,000, even if each and every one of them worked full time at the "rate of pay" shown by the payrolls. Actually at least one-quarter of them were working only "part-time" so that the total weekly income of the group was thereby considerably reduced. We believe that the figure of \$170,000 is a generous estimate of the actual earnings of this group of ten thousand workers each week.

*The Negro Woman Worker:*

The survey showed that comparatively few Negro women are employed by Allegheny County's larger industrial, or commercial firms. Of the 731 firms studied, 679 employ women in some capacity. But only 52 of these same 679 concerns that had women employees had any Negro women on their payrolls. Their Negro female employees totaled only 546 and only one of these was reported to be an office-employee. It apparently "just does not occur to the employers

that Negroes can do office work."

The largest employers of Negro women were the department stores (104), the hotels (102), the hospitals (97), the clothing trades (86), and the laundries (72). Practically all of those employed in the clothing trade worked in one plant.

The major classifications for these 546 Negro women workers were maids (100), needle workers (86), laundresses (73), tobacco strippers (18), elevator operators (15), janitresses (5), and checkroom attendants (5). The others were scattered as cleaners and dyers, cooks, dishwashers, matrons, wrappers, pressers and scrubwomen. There was one office-clerk, one saleslady, and one seamstress.

#### *Firms Not Employing Negroes:*

Of the 731 firms studied 282 (38.1 per cent) employed no Negroes whatever. They covered the entire field of business activity in the County and frequently were found to be located very near to competing firms which do hire Negroes. Of the 282 firms which do not employ Negroes in any capacity 86 come under the heading: "Firms employing fifty or more persons," with an aggregate employed force of 18,289. The ten largest of these firms alone have 10,044 employees on their payrolls, ranging from 4,600 to 400.

The reasons given for not employing Negroes varied, and were frequently ridiculous in the extreme. One firm reported that it could not hire Negroes because "the nature of our work makes it necessary for our employees to go into the intimate recesses of homes." Thousands of these same homes are occupied by Negro families while Negro servants certainly go into "the intimate recesses" of thousands of the white homes of the city. Another said: "The mill next door hires Negroes; therefore, we shouldn't."

The replies from the 86 largest forms (not employing Negroes) showed: No special reason (40); Negroes never applied (11); Specialized work at which no Negroes are skilled (9); Unions supply help and no Negroes members of the particular union (5); racial prejudice (21). "No work that can be segregated," "white help better," "in white locality," were some of the other answers to this question of why the payrolls are lily-white.

#### *Membership in Unions:*

The returns were grossly inaccurate and incomplete in regard to the membership of the Negro in organized bodies of labor. Save where there were company unions, the employer either did not know, or, knowing, would not give, figures on the union membership of his employees. Only 19 Negroes were reported by the employers as members of American Federation of Labor unions. The reports for industrial union membership were just as incomplete. It is known that many Negroes are members and, in several cases, officials of the United Mine Workers of America, the Trade Union Unity League and other industrial unions.

Moreover, in some cases, such as building trades, only those working at the moment were reported by the employer. Thus a Negro carpenter, holding a union card, but not employed by one of the construction companies the day the interviewer called, would not have been counted here, or elsewhere, in the study. The returns on unionization (as given by employers) are, therefore, without value. In passing, it should be noted that this subject, which is to be covered in the fourth of the series of surveys, is highly important since some of the unions supply all of the labor used in certain lines of employment--and no Negroes belong to certain of these unions.

*Study 2--The Negro in Retail Business Firms* covered 375 firms in a wide-spread variety of lines but was limited to the city of Pittsburgh alone. Of these 375 firms, 141 had either moved or gone out of business since their listing a few months before in the then current telephone directory; 47 were found to be improperly classified as retail business; and 18 refused to give the information sought. Figures were secured on 99 firms which together employed 1,068 persons, divided as follows:

White men	634
Negro men	111
White women	316
Negro women	7

There was no retail classification covered in which some Negro workers were not found. In most instances, they did menial work, with the largest number classified as porters. It is important to note that in these 99 firms only two Negro elevator operators were found. This field of work, once open as a "Negro job," would appear to be on the rapid decline. It is also important to note that here again, as in the case of the larger industrial firms, the Negro woman hardly enters the picture.

Among other interesting facts it was found that the NRA had affected, for the better, either the wages or hours, and in some instances both, in 18 cases. The highest weekly wage found among this group was \$22.50. In one instance a Negro man works for "tips only" as a poultry dresser in a kosher meat shop. Since the rabbis prepare all the kosher meat, the Negro is dependent upon the occasional gentile trade for his tips. Two porters in a jewelry store receive, respectively, \$17 and \$20 a week. The manager stated that they were being paid "on the basis of their needs, the number of their dependents, and their work records of 25 years."

It was found, as a result of these first two studies, that the Negro in the Pittsburgh district has not lost, nor gained, out of proportion to the workers of other nationalities and colors in the same plants. There has been no wholesale firing of Negroes, and almost no instances of replacements by workers of other races when forces have been re-hired. However, the fact that he is, and has been, confined to the lower paid and most-easily-dispensed-with processes has driven him to the relief rolls in disproportionate numbers. Also the almost complete cessation of building construction, in which large numbers of Negroes are ordinarily employed, had its effect.

These studies have accomplished in a few weeks what the "visitation service" of the Urban League and the State Employment Office must necessarily have taken months, or even years, to cover with their small regular staff. And in so rapidly changing a situation, there would never have been a "spot-picture" such as this use of Work Division investigators secured. The findings will have a bearing for years to come in the fields of employment, training, and vocational guidance. Negro boys and girls may be guided into those fields from which they are now excluded purely because of lack of training while efforts are made to open new fields among those firms which now maintain a lilly-white employment policy.

*Opportunity*, 13 (February, 1935): 40-42, 59.

#### 43. RELATIVE EFFICIENCY OF NEGRO AND WHITE WORKERS

The findings of several inquiries concerning the efficiency of Negro labor as compared to white labor are brought together in an article in the December 1934 issue of the *American Federationist*, by Robert C. Weaver, associate adviser of economic status of Negroes, United States Department of the Interior.

These findings are regarded as of special interest in view of the fact that since the setting up of the President's recovery program there has been a great deal of discussion on the relative efficiency of colored workers. In the South particularly it has been reported that Negroes are not so efficient as the white workers and that as a consequence it is "impossible and uneconomic" for employers in that part of the United States to pay these colored workers as much as white laborers.

According to the author of the article here reviewed there is no direct evidence to support or refute the statement. In his judgment, however, there are some pertinent data on the subject in question, although he doubts whether the efficiency of labor is scientifically measurable by race. He declares that up to the present no such studies have been made. The results of some investigations of the attitudes of employers on the matter and some additional data for a single industry are, however, available. The greater number of the inquiries as to the opinions of employers, made in the latter part of the last decade, are concerned with the North and the West. In those sections of the United States there is not so much industrial prejudice against the Negro as in the South. Moreover, the Negro workers are more carefully selected in the

North and West, and the information secured relates to a period in which Negro workers were entering industries from which they had been formerly excluded. Employers were uncertain as to the desirability of these newly tried laborers, who were used because other labor was not available. Such workers were not expected to be efficient, and, consequently, the favorable reports of employers upon the efficiency of Negro labor, while they do not disprove the statement that Negroes are less efficient workers, do tend to weaken it.

Among the inquiries cited in this article in the American Federationist is one made by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations in 1920. That body reported that 71 employers interviewed considered the Negro as efficient as white workers and 22 reported the Negro as less efficient; the first group, however, included nearly all of the large employers of Negroes.<sup>34</sup>

The following table is a compilation of the results of three other inquiries as to employers' opinions on the relative efficiency of Negro labor. One of these surveys was made by the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, another by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, and a third by J. Tinsley Willis in connection with the preparation of a master's thesis on Negro labor in the tobacco industry in North Carolina.

Efficiency and Regularity of Negroes as Compared to White Workers, according to Opinions of Employers

Efficiency and regularity	Detroit Bureau of Gov't. Research survey <sup>1</sup>		Penn. Dept. Public Welfare Survey <sup>2</sup>		J. Tinsley Willis survey <sup>3</sup>	
	No. firms reporting	Number employed	No. firms reporting	Number employed	No. firms reporting	Number employed
Degree of efficiency:						
More efficient	11	5,102	14	1,780	1	1,200
Same efficiency	68	12,631	32	6,400	3	13,677
Less efficient	24	2,729	10	1,120	0	-----
Not reported	17	1,109	--	-----	3	454
Total	120	21,571	56	9,300	7	15,331
Degree of regularity:						
More regular	7	199	3	431	0	-----
Same regularity	68	8,864	28	6,321	5	12,754
Less regular	33	11,587 <sup>4</sup>	25	2,548	1	2,177
Not reported	12	921	--	-----	1	400
Total	120	21,571	56	9,300	7	15,331

<sup>1</sup>Feldman, Herman. Racial Factors in American Industry. New York, 1931, p. 60. Data are for 1926.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson, Charles. The Negro in American Civilization. New York, 1930, pp. 70, 71.

<sup>3</sup>Willis J. Tinsley. Negro Labor in the Tobacco Industry in North Carolina. An unpublished master's thesis at New York University, 1932, pp. 46, 47. Data are for 1930.

<sup>4</sup>"Recent migration was felt to be responsible for the high rate of irregularity. Labor turn-over for Negro employees was thought to be generally less than that for white employees."

Commenting on these findings, Mr. Weaver says:

Although these data speak for themselves, a word should be said by way of explanation. In the first place, statistical material can never tell the whole picture. The Negro is not offered the same inducement to increase his efficiency as is his white prototype. Working conditions in the South are particularly unfavorable and in all sections of the country there are few inducements for efficiency by way of better jobs which act upon the colored workers. Thus employer assertion of equal efficiency for Negro workers assumes

greater importance and significance. It means that in spite of the traditional attitude toward the Negro, and in the face of the smaller likelihood of promotion that presents itself to colored workers, their labor has so proved its worth that it is judged to be as efficient as that of another group which has enjoyed and does enjoy greater advantages. This evidence points to the potentialities of Negro labor, if it is treated in a more just and sympathetic manner.

In Mr. Weaver's judgment, the closest approximation to a valid investigation of the efficiency and regularity of Negro labor is Miss Alma Herbst's study of the meat-packing industry in Chicago, published in 1932. Miss Herbst covers the "typical" establishment having the Bedeaux wage-payment system under which, after standard output is fixed, any worker exceeding it gets a premium. Although it is not certain that the workers fully understand this system and although the industrial processes do not render easy a precise allocation of production per man, the premium payments are instructive. When a group is given premiums, it is evidence that the output of the members of that group is above standard. They must have attained and exceeded the minimum efficiency requirements. The accompanying tabulation presents some of Miss Herbst's findings. The data are only for employees affected by the Bedeaux premium system.

Earnings of White and Negro Male Employees as Affected by Bedeaux Premium Wage Payment\*

Weekly Premiums	White Workers	Negro Workers	Total
Under \$2.50	230	49	279
\$2.50-\$4.99	111	30	141
\$5-\$7.49	31	16	47
\$7.50-\$9.90	20	12	32
\$10 and over	8	8	16
No premiums	102	0	102
Total	502	115	617

\*Include only those whose wages are affected by Bedeaux premium wage payment.

Fifteen and one-tenth percent of the white women eligible for premiums as contrasted to 6.5 percent of Negro women of the same group failed to receive these extra payments. The proportions awarded premiums up to \$5 were approximately the same for both races, but 16.3 percent of the Negro women as compared to 8.8 percent of the white women getting premiums had extra earnings of \$5 per week.

The sources cited in the article under review seem to indicate a tendency for the employers to feel that the Negro's regularity is less satisfactory than his efficiency. By way of explanation of this attitude, the author states that Negroes are as a rule hired to do unpleasant work which is frequently casual and that they are also marginal laborers with a slight hold on their jobs. These facts, in addition to the fact that the type of labor which falls to the lot of colored workers is of the kind that ordinarily has a higher turn-over, regardless of the race of those doing such labor, throw considerable light on the tendency toward irregularity. "For the most part," the author says, "this is an occupational and not a racial characteristic." It is found among Negroes because of their job distribution. He concedes, however, that there is a racial factor in this irregularity. The Negroes, he reports, find advancement based on ability very difficult and consequently have recourse to new jobs in order to improve their economic status. Moreover, "the greater degree of irregularity seems to have been, in part, an attribute of the post-war period." Again, rural workers find it no easy matter to adapt themselves to urban industry. The southern textile manufacturers have noted this tendency to irregularity in recently recruited white labor for the cotton mills. "There are evidences to the effect that Negroes, as they gain more industrial experience,

are reducing the degree of their irregularity." For example, in 1930 the North Carolina employers testified more favorably along this line than the Detroit employers at an earlier date.

The above analysis, according to the author, seems to show certain tendencies.

It seems to point out that the Negroes' efficiency varies in proportion to the favorableness of their working conditions. In addition, the Negro has become efficient in industries in the period since the World War. The evidence supplied by his employers and by an independent investigation is to the effect that he is as efficient as the white worker. When one considers the occupational distribution of colored workers, it seems that the irregularity of Negroes is about on a par with that for whites. In light of these findings, certain conclusions can be drawn. There is no reason for setting the wage for the Negro below that for white workers. Pleas for separate minimum wages for colored workers in the codes of fair competition rest upon a traditional attitude toward Negro labor. The assumption of lesser efficiency for Negroes has not been proved, and all the evidence we have about relative efficiency seems to refute the assertion.

*Monthly Labor Review*, 40 (February, 1935): 335-38.

#### 44. NEGRO IN INDUSTRY

##### Occupational Distribution of Negroes

Of every 1,000 gainfully occupied Negroes 10 years of age and over in the United States in 1930, 25 were reported in professional service as compared with 79 per 1,000 native white gainful workers in such service and 44 per 1,000 of the foreign-born white gainful workers. In clerical occupations, however, the findings were much less encouraging for the Negroes, only 7 per 1,000 of the gainful workers of that race being included under this classification, while the corresponding figures for the native and foreign-born white gainful workers were, respectively, 104 and 41.

Other contrasts for these three groups of the population are given in Table 1 from "Negroes in the United States, 1930-32", published by the United States Bureau of the Census in 1935.

Table 1. Gainful Workers 10 Years Old and Over, in the United States, per 1,000 Population, 1930, by Industry, Color, and Nativity

Industry	Distribution per 1,000 gainfully occupied		
	Native		White
	Negro	White	Foreignborn
Total	1,000	1,000	1,000
Agriculture	361	214	91
Domestic and personal service	287	66	127
Manufacturing and mechanical industries	186	275	441
Transportation, etc.	72	82	66
Trade	33	137	137
Professional service	25	79	44
Extraction of minerals	14	19	31
Public service (not elsewhere classified)	9	19	16
Clerical occupations	7	104	41
Forestry and fishing	6	5	6

According to Table 2, from the same report of the Bureau of the Census, the proportion of Negro gainful workers 10 years of age and over in the United States, in specified occupations in which Negroes predominated, 1930 ranged from 50.1 percent of the midwives and 50.6 percent of the bootblacks to 84.1 percent of the laborers in fertilizer factories.



Of 361,033 launderers and laundresses (not in laundries), 75.1 per cent were Negroes, and of 321,722 cooks other than in hotels, restaurants, and boarding houses, 68.5 per cent were Negroes.

Table 2. Distribution of Gainful Workers 10 Years of Age and Over in Occupations in Which Negro Workers Predominated in the United States, 1930

Occupation	Total, all classes	Negroes			Per cent of all classes
		Total	Males	Females	
Bootblacks	18,784	9,499	9,481	18	50.6
Cooks, other than in hotels, and boarding houses	321,722	220,538	17,478	203,060	68.5
Laborers, cigar and tobacco factories	20,581	12,254	8,863	3,391	59.5
Laborers, turpentine farms and distilleries	37,620	30,849	30,577	272	82.0
Laborers, fertilizer factories	18,243	15,347	15,268	79	84.1
Launderers and laundresses (not in laundry)	361,033	271,083	1,985	269,098	75.1
Midwives	3,566	1,787	-----	1,787	50.1
Operatives, fertilizer factories	1,538	1,039	1,000	39	67.6
Operatives, turpentine farms and distilleries	1,368	726	721	5	53.1
Porters, except in stores	127,488	93,744	93,714	30	73.5

*Monthly Labor Review*, 42 (April, 1936): 975-6.

#### 45. THE LIFE OF NEGROES IN THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

By Bill Smedley

Ford, one of the largest automobile plants in the world, and General Motors Corporation is another automobile concern with branches throughout the State of Michigan.

There is not one of these industries that doesn't employ Negro labor. The majority of the Negro workers have come from the South seeking work. This was because of the big headlines printed in the newspapers and general agitation concerning Ford's and high wages in the Automobile industry. And especially because the Negroes thought freedom from discrimination, Jim-Crowism and the right of their cultural development would be permitted.

On coming to the North, discrimination and Jim-Crowism took on different forms. Whereas Negro and white aren't allowed to ride together on the street cars, trains, etc. (on the train for example, the Negro must sit in the coach near the engine where all the smoke comes through) in the North they ride together. On jobs in the South where Negro and white work together, they must not eat together and they drink water out of cups that are marked--one for the white and another for the Negroes. This policy is not so prevalent in the North. In the South, the right to vote is denied to 3/4 of the Negro population, while the North they have the right to vote. In the South separate schools are built for the Negro and white youth, and consequently many privileges are given the white over the Negro youth by the State and county officials. The schools of the whites are much more comfortable than those of the Negroes. The expenditures for education by the State county amount to \$2.89 for Negroes per term and \$10.32 for whites. (Chas. Johnson, "The Negro in American Civilization"). In the rural districts particularly, Negroes attend school 7 months per year and the whites 9. In the North they attend the same schools equally insofar as time is concerned.<sup>35</sup>

## Policy of Discrimination

On receiving jobs in the North, the Negro is given the worst. In Chevrolet (G.M.C.) there are very few Negroes operating machines. They are either cleaning the floors, machines, etc., or out in the steel yard. Therefore, their wages are considerably lower than the white workers' because they "can't" operate the machine. In the South he operates the machine, but receives 1/3 of the wages as that of the white worker for the same work. In Briggs (G.M.C.), thousands of Negro youth are employed. Their job is sanding automobile bodies. There are approximately five times more white than Negro workers employed but not one single white worker is on this job. Ford has a reputation for distributing jobs equally, in other words, "equal rights" to the Negroes. But Ford's work is done mainly with machines; if he is to work Negroes at all they must operate machines. But look in the foundry at Ford's. Of course that is the hottest and heaviest spot in any factory. Here, where the most strenuous energy is required, is where the Negroes in Ford's predominate. That is his "equal rights" to the Negroes. Oh! There is just another instance by the way, to make sure that Ford is for equal rights for the Negroes. Dearborn is a city where no one but Ford workers live. But the Negroes are not only forbidden to live there--but better not be caught there, especially after sun-down, if they don't want to be terrorized by the police.

In May, 1935, a Negro went to speak at a May Day celebration. When he got off the street car and walked about 4 blocks he was stopped by the police scout car and told that "No Negroes live in this city--what are you doing here?" Of course his answer was that he had a white friend who was helping him to get a job at Ford's. He was told to get out as quickly as possible.

Let us take Briggs. Here the Negroes get the jobs of sanding auto bodies, trucking, etc. Sanding requires dipping your hands in water from the time you enter the plant until your day's work is finished. The end of your fingers are almost worn off after having worked there for any length of time. You must also stand in water without rubbers on your feet. Trucking is hauling auto bodies to and fro lifting, straining, etc. There is not a white worker on either of these jobs in spite of the fact that they are in the majority in the factory.

Thus, the difference in the North and South is that the signs for Negro and white to go by are not posted up. If we take another phase of work we will see that discrimination is not a mere accident but the policy of the bosses. In City Service there are 210 Negroes employed out of a total 23,364 employed in municipal jobs. The Negroes in this city constitute 6.7% of the population, but 26% are on relief rolls.

Negroes and white attend the same schools, theatres, and restaurants. But in many theatres and restaurants are not permitted. For example, in July, 1935, I, together with some white friends went in to the Wayne drugstore for a soda. We all called for the same flavor and portion. Theirs was 10¢ and mine was 25¢. Well, of course my friends together with me refused the drink and reported the case to the American Youth Congress that was in session at that time for rather a meeting of the Executive Committee, in the Wayne Hotel. A committee was sent down, a picket line formed and forced the management of the drugstore to promise elimination of discriminatory practices.

The ruling class have also their Negro agents who play a treacherous role against the Negro people. In February, 1935, the Negro workers in Ford's plant began to manifest their willingness to struggle against low wages, speed-up and for the 6-hour day, without reduction in pay. Marshall (Negro) assistant employment agent at Ford's stated: "The Negroes must keep out of the unions if they want to work at Ford's. Ford has always gotten along without the unions." (Detroit Independence, Feb. 1935).

Corrupted politics is so predominant, that even in getting a job at present you must be recommended by the preachers and politicians. Especially, is it significant to note the role the leaders of the church organizations play. Rev. Bradley, pastor of the 1st Baptist Church is known as one who sells jobs for Fords. To get a job requires a "good character" and from \$10 to \$20. Chas. Boxborough, once State senator of Michigan, 1930, is also known as one who can "fix" you up with a job at Fords.

The Negro people are beginning to seek their way out through united working class action on the economic and political field. In the fall elections of 1935, the heaviest vote for Maurice Sugar in Detroit (labor candidate for

councilman) was obtained among the Negro population.

On October 23, 1935 an "Economic Conference on Negroes in Michigan," was held at which representatives of many organizations were present such as: Churches, N.A.A.C.P., tenants leagues, Y.M.C.A and Y.W.C.A and similar organizations. Delegates were elected to the conference held in Chicago (Negro Congress), program of struggle for the rights of the Negro people adopted, and a committee set up to lead in the building of the organization that will help free them from the oppression of the bosses.

*The Black Worker*, 6 (August-September, 1936): 10-12.

#### 46. NEGRO SEAMEN IN THE U.S.A.

By A Seaman

Negro seamen in the U.S.A. are more and more being driven out of the industry. In 1928 and 1929 there was hardly a ship sailing the high seas that did not carry Negro seamen in one of its departments. During the days of coal burning ships, two ships out of three carried Negro firemen. Since then, the ships have been installed with oil burners and the work is lighter, the Negroes have been replaced with white firemen. There are still a few Negro firemen working on some of the remaining coal burning ships, especially those that run to countries having a hot climate. These few seamen, knowing that if they lose this job they will not be able to get another ship, are forced to accept extremely low wages, some of them having to stand six-hours watches.

The only place for the Negro seamen today is in the stewards department. Here they have to work from ten to twelve hours a day, and have to do the job of an ordinary seamen also, such as scraping, and painting the galley gangways. They stop this half hour before meal time in order to prepare to serve the officers and crew. On most ships the stewards department receive the lowest wages. Some companies paying less than \$30.00 per month. But now even these jobs are not secure for the Negro seamen. The crews of this department are being replaced by white crews.

In 1928 the American Hampton Roads Line carried Negroes in stewards departments on every ship in the fleet. Gradually they were removed. Why were they removed? Because they were inefficient? No, the captains of the ships were forced to admit that they understood their jobs and were able seamen. After 1929 along with the lowering of the standard of living of the workers in the factories the seamen's standard lowered also. The seamen became dissatisfied, the Marine Workers League was organized and began to carry on propaganda among the seamen, explaining to them the necessity of unity. The shipowners knew that with the Negro and White seamen united they would not be able to carry out their wage slashing programme. They began to carry out their policy of divide and rule, by replacing Negro crews by white crews, which helped to create antagonism between the two races.

More than once have the white seamen been told that if they did not like the wages and conditions on the ships, they would be replaced by the Negro seamen. The same is told to the few remaining Negro seamen that are on the ships, if they don't like the job they can get off, because there are white seamen waiting for the job. This left each group of seamen blaming the other for their destitute condition.

The seamen are now beginning to wake up. They are beginning to realize that only the unity of both Negro and white will win jobs and decent wages for them on any ship and in any department they are capable of working in.

The recent strike on the Eastern Steamship Company gave proof of this. This company, carrying 600 Negro stewards on its ships, were forced to give the stewards higher wages and shorter hours, because the white members of the crew supported them. The company was unable to divide them by offering to give the stewards their demands and repeating to give the white members of the crew their demands, simply because these 600 Negro stewards refused to go back to work until all demands were settled. Only in such a way will the Negro seamen remain in the industry, and win the right to work in any department he is able

to, instead of being limited to washing pots and pans.

*The Black Worker*, 6 (August-September, 1936): 12-13.

#### 47. SOCIAL-ECONOMIC STATUS OF NEGROES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Approximately 4 (3.8) percent of the 73,122 Negro gainful workers in the District of Columbia in 1930 were professional persons, 1.7 percent were proprietors, managers, or officials, and 6.3 percent were clerks and kindred workers. The majority, 66.2 percent, were unskilled workers. Of the 31,311 Negro female gainful workers, 75.1 percent were unskilled, servants being included in this group.

The following table from a press release of the United States Bureau of the Census, dated May 12, 1937, shows the distribution of gainful workers in the District of Columbia in social-economic groups, by color or race, and sex, in 1930. In this presentation approximately 83.8 percent of the Negro gainful workers are classified as unskilled or semi-skilled, as compared to 17.9 percent of the native white and 32.1 percent of the foreign-born white.

*Gainful Workers in the District of Columbia, by Color or Race,  
Sex, and Class, 1930*

Sex and class of workers	Number				Percent			
	Total <sup>1</sup>	Native white	For- eign- born white	Negro	Total <sup>1</sup>	Native white	For- eign- born white	Negro
Total workers	243,853	153,367	16,818	73,122	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Prof. persons	24,903	20,399	1,666	2,784	10.2	13.3	9.9	3.8
Props. mgrs., & officials	18,465	13,512	3,604	1,217	7.6	8.8	21.4	1.7
Clks. & kind. workers	76,023	68,151	3,161	4,640	31.2	44.4	18.8	6.3
Skilled wkrs., and foremen	29,963	23,780	2,996	3,180	12.3	15.5	17.8	4.3
Semi-sk. wkrs.	36,164	20,551	2,617	12,871	14.8	13.4	15.6	17.6
Unskilled wkrs.	58,335	6,974	2,774	48,430	23.9	4.5	16.5	66.2
Laborers	19,674	3,537	570	15,551	8.0	2.3	3.4	21.3
Serv. classes	38,661	3,437	2,204	32,879	15.9	2.2	13.1	45.0
Male workers	155,028	99,709	13,002	41,811	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Prof. persons	14,850	12,430	1,127	1,242	9.6	12.5	8.7	3.0
Props. mgrs., & officials	17,110	12,529	3,367	1,084	11.0	12.6	25.9	2.6
Clks., & kind. workers	37,718	32,129	1,978	3,554	24.3	32.2	15.2	8.5
Skilled wkrs., and foremen	29,503	23,465	2,945	3,086	19.0	23.5	22.7	7.4
Semi-sk. wkrs.	24,407	14,441	1,900	7,945	15.7	14.5	14.6	19.0
Unskilled wkrs.	31,440	4,715	1,685	24,900	20.3	4.7	13.0	59.6
Laborers	19,223	3,422	543	15,242	12.4	3.4	4.2	36.5
Serv. classes	12,217	1,293	1,142	9,658	7.9	1.3	8.8	23.1
Female wkrs.	88,825	53,658	3,816	31,311	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Prof. persons	10,053	7,969	539	1,542	11.3	14.9	14.1	4.9
Props., mgrs., & officials	1,355	983	237	133	1.5	1.8	6.2	.4
Clks. & kind. workers	38,305	36,022	1,183	1,086	43.1	67.1	31.0	3.5
Skilled wkrs., and foremen	460	315	51	94	.5	.6	1.3	.3
Semi-sk. wkrs.	11,757	6,110	717	4,926	13.2	11.4	18.8	15.7
Unskilled wkrs.	26,895	2,259	1,089	23,530	30.3	4.2	28.5	75.1
Laborers	451	115	27	309	.5	.2	.7	1.0
Serv. classes	26,444	2,144	1,062	23,221	29.8	4.0	27.8	74.2

<sup>1</sup>Includes figures for 545 workers of "other races"--506 males and 40 females.

*Monthly Labor Review*, 45 (September, 1937): 612.

PART II

BLACK WOMEN WORKERS

## BLACK WOMEN WORKERS

World War I produced a Great Migration of black men and women from the agricultural South to the industrial North. By the first decade of the century, the machinery of segregation had been installed, and the accompanying economic intimidation, violence, and lynching constituted sound evidence that the South held no future for black people. At the same time, industry in the northern industrial centers was stimulated by the increased production of war armaments. The demand for labor became even stronger when European immigration came to a halt and American men, both black and white, embarked for foreign battlefields.

Few black women followed industrial pursuits prior to World War I, most non-agricultural female workers being concentrated in domestic service. But the increased demand for industrial workers during the war, and the increasing mechanization of heavy manual labor occupations brought a large influx of black women into industry. Many of these women were former domestics, but most came from among the supply of newly arrived southern migrants. In Philadelphia, for example, the black population increased 48 per cent between 1910 and 1920 (see Doc. 1). Consequently, by the mid-twenties, black women represented about 10 per cent of all female workers in the United States, but 18.4 per cent of all working women. More than twice as many were in the labor force as native-born white women, and six times more black girls under sixteen had to work than their native-born counterparts.

Black women felt the impact of the Great Depression earliest and bore the heaviest burdens. Their tenuous foothold on industrial employment began to give way before the waves of returning soldiers who replaced them according to the principle of "last hired, first fired." On the eve of the depression once again most black women workers were in domestic service or in menial occupations in shops and factories. With the widespread unemployment, however, white women, by now willing to take any kind of job, began to replace black domestics and menial laborers in factories. By April, 1931, black women bore a disproportionate share of the unemployment. In Cleveland, for example, where one-sixth of the white women were jobless, more than half of the black women workers were unemployed. In Louisville, Kentucky, one-half of the black women, in contrast to less than one-fourth of the white women, were without jobs.

Those black women who did find employment were exploited, having to work long hours under poor conditions for inadequate pay. Frequently they were forced into the most undesirable and dangerous occupations in the particular industry, and just as women earned less than men during the depression, black women earned less than white women. Even though they were most in need of a strong union, black women were among the least organized of all workers. Some unions were open to them and fought to improve these conditions, such as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, but most unions were either closed to blacks, ignored women, or were so structured that they expressed little concern for the unskilled worker.

The problems confronting black women workers are illustrated in Part II.

## NEGRO WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

## 1. COLORED WOMEN AS INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN PHILADELPHIA

## INTRODUCTION

This study has discovered no indication of any considerable number of colored women being employed before the World War, outside of domestic service and those industries included in the general term "public housekeeping." With the war came opportunities that brought a new day to this race. These opportunities were mainly due to three causes: (a) the industries were calling for workers, (b) immigration to the United States was rapidly decreasing, and (c) a large percentage of the male population of working age was being withdrawn for war service.

(a) The demand for workers was great because of Philadelphia's industrial position and the fact that the Federal Government operates here three establishments that have especially to do with army and navy preparations, namely, Frankford Arsenal, the United States Navy Yard, and the Philadelphia Depot of the Quartermaster's Department, United States Army.

(b) While the industries were needing workers the immigration decreased in the whole United States as follows:

From 1,218,480 in 1914 to 110,618 in 1918  
to 141,132 in 1919

In the port of Philadelphia the decline of immigration is even more noticeable:

From 56,857 in 1914 to 7,114 in 1915  
to 229 in 1916  
to 274 in 1917  
to 386 in 1918  
to 333 in 1919

(c) The third thing mentioned as contributing toward a new day for the colored was the fact that, roughly estimated, the men who went into war service from Philadelphia numbered 85,000, which meant just so many less workers at home.

It will be shown that the industrial labor supply was augmented to a considerable extent by colored women from domestic service, but in addition to this mere transference from one occupation to others, an actual increase in the colored population of the city at this time increased the total supply of colored labor. The census figures for 1910 showed 84,459 colored here in a total population of 1,549,000. To go a step further, 66,480 negroes were fifteen years of age and over, and of this number, 35,790 were females of working age. . . .

The Philadelphia Year Book estimates that the negroes in 1919 in Philadelphia number 125,000, or an increase of 48 per cent in nine years.

The fact that colored women were engaging in new and totally different lines of industry was noticeable. They were on Noble Street cleaning up after the track repairers and, in an interview while taking shelter during a rain storm, one woman said they were there because of the "almighty dollar." In a laundry they had been getting only \$7 a week with a \$2 a month bonus, and on the street work the wage was 30 cents an hour. On still another street they worked on the tracks with picks and shovels. They were also in evidence in and about railroad terminals, cleaning the outside of trains and replacing the night men who cleaned the waiting rooms. In office buildings they were replacing men as elevator operators.

The newspapers reflected the situation:



"Use negro woman labor to fill war workers' gaps," reads one caption.

"Negro women take places of men in industries; work as railroad track-hands, munition makers, inspectors and porters," reads another, which continues, "Negro women are repairing railway tracks, making explosives, and serving as porters and inspectors in many industries here, taking the places of men who have gone to war or have entered other industries. Through a government agency more than 300 of these women have been placed in positions within a week. \_\_\_\_\_, manager of the agency, says an average of 100 negro women a day apply there. Many of these women are at work at the Frankford Arsenal and other government plants about the city. Others are working as track-hands on the \_\_\_\_\_ Railroad."

"Ice women replace men here. Four women now handle the ice tongs at the \_\_\_\_\_ Ice plant, replacing men who have gone to war. They have made good."

"Colored girls avoid housework. Y.W.C.A. is placing many in shops and factories, but few seek domestic service."

"Negro's chance coming at last. Stoppage of immigration due to war strips South of colored labor."

Newspaper advertisements such as the following frequently appeared:

"Twenty-five colored operators wanted with experience on double needle machine for government bed sacks--wages from \$24.00 up."

One in authority reported that there were 500 women munition workers on the night force in the Arsenal; a colored employment agency reported that many Philadelphia colored girls were in munition works in the neighboring towns that could be reached by trolley; an official visitor to a large number of garment and needle factories that were producing supplies for the government, observed colored women employees; and a study among the home workers for the Schuylkill Arsenal not only showed that the colored women took home shirts and other garments to sew for the army, but that they were often rated among the best workers. A hosiery firm (possibly anticipating a labor shortage) rented a hall in connection with a colored institution, and installed knitting machines under the supervision of a white forelady. Great difficulty was encountered in getting women to go there to learn, and it was said that those who did go were mostly southern negroes who had never been in a factory before. This difficulty in recruiting might have been due to the very low wages given; a flat rate of \$4.50 a week was offered while learning, after which 8-1/2 cents a dozen pairs was given with a one-half cent bonus on sixteen dozen pairs a day, and one cent on eighteen dozen. When this place was visited one girl was getting \$9.40 a week for eighteen dozens a day; another girl could make fifteen dozens, thereby getting \$7. In a waste factory visited, colored women had replaced men, sewing up bales of the waste which necessitated continuous standing and working in unattractive surroundings, permeated with much dust, and, to quote the employer, were "doing work that no white women would do." In a shoddy mill some colored girls fed the picker machines for \$11 a week. They had been doing it six months when interviewed and although working in a basement where there was much dust from the product, they were enthusiastic about factory work; particularly liking the regular hours with no night work and no Sunday work. Realizing that many were entering the garment trades, an effort was made to ascertain their status, and it was found that at least fifty union shops had some colored workers. They were a new element and brought to the union many perplexing problems which will be discussed in this study.

Such, briefly, were the conditions when the armistice was signed: housekeepers were complaining that their domestic workers had deserted them for their husbands' business; it was a matter of much comment that colored women were working on the streets--obviously in positions that involved too much strain for women; the newspapers devoted space to assignments on the colored women workers and carried advertisements for them; factory inspectors noted them as innovations and the unions reported they were in their shops and even that they "had driven the whites from a few shops." With few exceptions, wages were low and were threatening to undermine fair and reasonable standards. A need was felt for more information on the subject, and the Consumers' League decided to undertake this study in order to present information that could be a help in clarifying public thinking.

The Chamber of Commerce expressed its interest in a letter to its members, saying "the League will attempt to discover the number of colored women who

have worked in the industries of Philadelphia during the war and the number who are now employed, the nature and quality of their work, with the idea of discovering for what particular work colored women are best suited," and asked them to "co-operate with the Consumers' League to the fullest extent in furnishing information and affording facilities for gathering the necessary data in making this very valuable study." The League is happy to state that the majority of the employers called upon were most generous in their co-operation. The Waist and Dress Manufacturers' Association extended an invitation to visit all its shops. Among the organizations of the city that helped were the following: Armstrong Association, Public Schools, Department of Compulsory Attendance, Young Women's Christian Association, Unions, Society for Organizing Charity and Red Cross. To all of these, and to the friends who contributed time and money, and to the colored workers interviewed, the League extends its very great thanks.

## SCOPE

The investigation of which this report is the summary, was undertaken with a view to ascertaining how far colored women in Philadelphia have entered the industrial field and with what results.

The table of contents and the questionnaires in the back show the phases of the subject that have been covered. Throughout the work, the League has tried to be non-partisan; it has enlisted the services of two paid colored workers to assist its staff of white workers; experienced white research workers have visited 108 factories and shops and have asked the employers and managers for their candid opinions; white and colored workers have visited 190 colored girls and women outside of working hours to ascertain facts concerning their working experiences; and the League has asked the unions to express their policies toward the colored women.

The field work was done between September, 1919 and June, 1920. More or less difficulty was encountered because of the generally unsettled labor conditions; the garment industry for example, that was found to offer the broadest field for colored women workers, had a slack period that extended from January until the study was completed.

It is to be noted that all employers did not answer every question touched upon and that their remarks about wages were not read from payrolls.

### Industries (28) and Processes (74) in Which Colored Women Were Found

Garments	Wrappers
Trimmers	Sorters
Pressers	Porters
Operators	Shirts
Caps	Trimmers
Trimmers	Pressers
Pressers	Operators
Quilts	Candy
Trimmers	Packers
Operators	Machine operators
Embroideries	Dippers
Stampers	Makers
Trimmers	Paper Boxes
Hand embroiderers	Folders
Operators	Machine operators
Tobacco	Stitchers
Strippers	Toppers
Banders	Cutters
Packers	Paper Novelties
Department Stores	Folders
Stock girls	Packers
Maids	Assistants at presses
Cleaners	Cleaning and Dyeing
Elevator operators	Pressers
Waitresses	

Laundries	Winders
Mangle workers	Operators
Sorters	Elevators
Machine ironers	Operators
Hand ironers	Restaurants and Hotels
Wrappers	Maids
Markers	Cleaners
Glass	Cooks
Assistants to blowers	Waitresses
Cleaners of globes	Waste
Files	Sorters
Assistants to forge men	Machine feeders
Scrapers	Overgaiters
Jellies and Preserves	Button sewers
Fruit preparers	Buttons
Jar fillers	Button covering machine operators
Railroads	Pickles
Cleaners	Cutters
Linen clerks	Millinery Trimmings
Arsenal	Winders
Carpenters in cot salvage department	Ornament makers
Knitting--Sweaters and Hosiery	Textiles
Trimmers	Sorter
Pressers	Bakeries
Menders	Cleaners
Machine sewers	Pan greasers
	Private Dressmaking
	Assistant

## SOME INDUSTRIES OF PHILADELPHIA EMPLOYING COLORED WOMEN, AND THE WAGES THEY PAY

## Garments

From the standpoint of the numbers employed, the number of processes performed, the progress made, and the range of wages paid, the garment industry is the most important for the colored women. From the standpoint of opportunities for collective bargaining, it is also one of the most important.

In 126 garment shops, for which information was secured, there were 5,822 women and of this number 842, or 14 per cent, were colored; 42 shops employed no colored; and in the 84 others, out of a total of 3,622 women, 842, or 33 per cent, were colored. Four shops employed only colored, while nine employed more colored than white. The majority of the colored women were pressers (38 per cent) and trimmers (32 per cent)--the least skilled work--and only about 30 per cent were power machine operators. For the most part these operators were doing the coarser work on middies, overalls, and house dresses, but in a few of the better shops they were making georgette waists, silk dresses and gowns. No men's shirt factories were visited, but some of the workers were interviewed who press and operate in them.

When one considers the short time that they have had access to this skilled industry the progress that they have made is surprising. Of 53 employers who made statements concerning the length of time they had had colored women, 10 had employed them less than one year, 17 for one year, 11 for two years, 6 for three years, 4 for four years, 2 for five years, 1 "off and on" for ten years, and 2 for fifteen years. Furthermore there are records in the Consumers' League office that show that not longer ago than 1912, the subject of colored women entering the shirtwaist trade was causing especial concern to the organized workers and to people interested in the welfare of the colored race. At that date there was one shop employing colored women exclusively. Interest in the question centered about these points: the reliability of the colored women, their speed, their accuracy, and a comparison of their wages with wages of white workers.

Work records were secured for 54 women in this industry. Twenty-three had been domestics in private homes; an equal number had done no other work; one had been a teacher and the rest had worked in laundries, box factories, printing shops or munition plants. Not more than half had two years of experience in any industry.

Some employers are unaware how far the colored have entered industry, and especially their own industry, for as one manager of a prominent shop said, "Why, colored girls have been coming and asking for work as operators just like white girls!"

According to the statements made by employers concerning the wages paid to colored workers, 50 per cent of them received \$16 a week or less, the operators averaging \$19, the pressers \$16, and the trimmers \$13. The wages received by the women interviewed were lower, for the range of wages of the operators was \$7 to \$39; as a matter of fact, the majority fell between \$10 and \$20. The median wage was \$16 (that is, 50 per cent received this amount or less). For the trimmers, the wages ranged from \$10 to \$16 with a median wage of \$13, and for the pressers, wages ranged from \$7 to \$20 with a median of \$11. According to these workers the median wage was \$13, contrasted with the employers' median of \$16, and only 35 per cent received \$16 or more, as contrasted with the employers' estimate of 50 per cent. If the wages are considered on a yearly basis they are even less, for this industry is seasonal and the workers are usually out of employment or on part time work eight weeks during the year. In abnormal times the slack period may be even longer, as it has been since January 1 of this year; most of the girls have been out of work from three to six months, and there is now little prospect that work will be resumed before another three months. The majority of the operators and pressers are paid on a piece work scale, while almost all of the trimmers are paid by the week.

Twenty-three of 64 employers interviewed were entirely satisfied with their colored employees, 16 thought them "slow," "careless," "lazy," or "unreliable," 5 considered them "inferior to the white workers," 7 were satisfied with those they had, but did not care to employ more or to try them in other departments, 3 employed them on one process, but had found them inefficient on others and 11 were satisfied with the quality of their work, but found them unsatisfactory in other respects, principally in regularity of attendance. This fault was so often mentioned by employers in other industries as well that it will be discussed in a later page in connection with the general record of colored girls as industrial workers, but it might be said here that the garment industry itself is notorious for irregularity of employment, holding one of the most prominent places in the list of industries described as "seasonal."

Closely related to the garment industry are the embroidery shops, quilt factories, and cap manufacturing establishments, where girls are employed in the same processes--trimming, pressing and operating. In the embroidery shops colored girls are also working as pinners, stampers and hand embroiderers, for which they receive wages ranging from \$9 to \$12, with an average of only \$10.

One factory making quilts had employed colored women for the last two years. They were replacing men, who, the employer said, "were too much Bolsheviks, and wanted more money and shorter hours." These women were getting from \$8 to \$16. There were 20 operators and 10 finishers.

In a cap factory three colored girls were found sewing and pressing, work which they had been doing during the past year. Their wages were \$10, \$12 and \$15 a week.

Number of Women Interviewed in Garment Trade, Their  
Occupations and Weekly Wages

WEEKLY WAGES			OCCUPATIONS			
			All	Trimmers	Pressers	Operators
All			54	7	9	38
\$7 and under	8		2		1	1
8 "	"	9	1		1	1
9 "	"	10	2		1	1
10 "	"	11	11	2	2	7
11 "	"	12	3	1	1	1
12 "	"	13	6			6
13 "	"	14	3	1	2	
14 "	"	15	3	2		1
15 "	"	16	1			1
16 "	"	17	2	1		1
17 "	"	18	4			4
18 "	"	19	2		1	1
19 "	"	20	3			3
20 "	"	22	3		1	2
22 "	"	23	1			1
23 "	"	25	2			2
25 "	"	27	1			1
27 "	"	33	1			1
33 "	"	39	2			2
39 "	"	40	1			1

Averages of Weekly Wages According to Occupations

Weekly Wages	Trimmers	Pressers	Operators
Mean	\$13	\$12	\$16
Median	13	11	16

Note on the Next Five Industries

In 1919 the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the New York Department of Labor published a special bulletin on "Weekly Earnings of Women in Five Industries" (paper boxes, shirts and collars, confectionery, cigars and tobacco, and mercantile establishments). In explaining the purpose and scope of this investigation, they said that aside from the general interest in the subject, "there was special occasion for securing such information just at this time owing to the active movement for minimum wage legislation at the present session of the Legislature. With the question of the wisdom of such legislation or with argument for or against it, this bulletin does not undertake to deal. The aim is only to afford some substantial, impartial and accurate information as to what women's wages actually are at the present time, which information would seem to be the necessary background for most intelligent discussion of legislative proposals dealing with the subject." Among the reasons given for selecting these particular five industries was mentioned "to take those in which women's wages are of grades relatively low rather than high."

The present study found colored girls in these relatively low-paid industries in Philadelphia as the following paragraphs will show.

Tobacco

In tobacco factories, colored women have been employed possibly a longer time than in any other industry. Six out of eight factories had had them for nine years or more, and one factory had employed them so long the managers could not remember just how long--"about seventy years," they thought. The girls are working for the most part on the least skilled process, that of stripping, which is pulling the midrib from the tobacco leaf, and is the first step in the manufacture of cigars. While it is the least skilled, it requires considerable dexterity and speed. It is extremely monotonous and is usually done in dark and crowded rooms, where the workers sit on low stools and boxes.

Very few white girls do this work, but many colored; one factory alone employed 175, and in eleven establishments there were 425. They are skillful strippers, and most of the employers say they would not have white women for the work. In one place where both white and colored women work, the colored make more money than the white.

Stripping is almost entirely piece work, and the women come and go as they please. When asked how many hours they worked, one foreman said, "Oh, some come in for only seven hours a week." In only two establishments were colored girls employed on other processes; in one, 150 girls were packing cigarettes, and in the other, one girl was banding and one packing cigars. "Banding," which is pasting the paper band around the cigar, is not skilled work; but "packing," which is sorting the cigars according to shades and placing them in boxes, is an operation that requires some skill and experience. No colored girls were found as "makers," the most skilled process in the industry. During the war they were put on trial in this process in one factory. At the end of two months the experiment was abandoned because, as the manager said, "the girls were too slow in their movements ever to become good makers."

It was rather difficult to secure through the investigation information concerning wages in the tobacco trade. According to the statements of 9 employers, the average wage was \$18, but the 5 tobacco workers interviewed averaged only \$10. In the monthly Labor Review for March, 1920, there is published a study of wages and hours in the tobacco industry. Six Philadelphia establishments with 354 strippers, were covered, showing the average wage as \$10.85 a week and the average number of hours worked a week as 42.6.

In the factory where the girls packed cigarettes, they were paid better wages and worked in light, well-ventilated quarters and were said to be very satisfactory. No fault was found either with their speed or with the regularity of their attendance. They received from \$12 to \$16 a week.

#### Department Stores

Most of the larger department stores have had colored girls many years, "ten years at least," said one employment manager. The majority work as maids, cleaners, elevator operators and waitresses, with some as stock girls, wrappers, soda fountain girls, porters and sorters (of packages)--principally, it will be noticed, in capacities in which they do not come in contact with the public.

Five of the largest department stores employ about 400 at wages ranging from \$8 to \$12, with the greatest number receiving \$8, \$9 and \$10. Waitresses are paid from \$4 to \$6 plus tips, but the girls say that even with tips one seldom averages more than \$12 a week.

#### Shirts

Seven girls were interviewed who were pressers or power machine operators in shirt factories. Their wages ranged from \$9 to \$33 a week, and averaged \$15. However, these included two very experienced operators who made \$20 and \$33 a week respectively. The remainder averaged only \$10 a week.

#### Candy

It was said in one of the largest candy factories which has been employing colored girls since the war, that they now number at least 50 per cent. Thirty-one girls who had worked there or were working there at the time this study was made described conditions. Those who had left complained of wages that were not only low, but lower for colored than for white, of trouble with the white foreman, and of friction between them and the white workers. All complained of insanitary toilets and lack of adequate facilities for washing, dirty conditions in the factory, and insufficient locker space; some that they were subject to sore hands as a result of working in chocolate without rubber gloves. "Girls come and go frequently," they said, and the ever-present "girls wanted" sign in the window seems to substantiate this criticism.

Wage reports were obtained from twenty-one girls now working there. They range from \$8 to \$13, with only one receiving \$13, one \$12, two \$10, thirteen \$9, and four \$8; only four, therefore, were receiving more than \$9. The two girls who were getting \$12 and \$13 were machine feeders; the others, wrappers, packers, moulders, mixers and machine operators.

There seemed to be no policy concerning raises; in fact, few had had them. Six of the girls had worked for one year or more and were still receiving the initial wage, \$8 or \$9; for only eight had there been a raise. Some complained that they had been promised an increase, but had never received it.

Colored girls were found in three small factories as packers, dippers and helpers. One shop employing five colored girls and twice as many white, had three colored girls as helpers, one as a dipper, and one who worked with the candy makers, doing work usually done by a man. In these smaller shops the wages ranged from \$9 to \$15, with the majority at the lower wages.

Wages in the candy industry are low generally. In "Wages of Candy Makers in Philadelphia in 1919," a study made by the Women in Industry Service of the United States Department of Labor, it is stated (page 17) that the median weekly wage of 1,246 candy workers was \$10.30. In the present study the wages of the colored seem to average even less. Candy making is a seasonal industry, which means that the yearly earnings are less than represented by the weekly statements.

#### Paper Boxes and Paper Novelties

Low wages are also general in the paper box and paper novelty industries. When learners, the girls get from \$7 to \$10 a week, and when experienced, seldom make more than \$14 or \$16. The hand work of folding and packing requires little skill, but operating cutting, taping and stitching machines calls for quickness and accuracy, and colored girls were working on all these processes. Two employers interviewed said that they had proved very satisfactory, and one factory employed only colored girls.

A novelty shop that makes paper caps and horns employed only colored girls, cutting, covering and pasting. They were not considered so skillful as the white girls whom they had replaced, but as they had been employed only four months, it was rather soon to expect them to have acquired skill.

A large lithographing company making calendars, postcards and holiday cards, employs about 25 colored girls and 74 white girls. The white girls tint the cards and operate the presses for the most part, while the colored girls fold and pack the cards, and assist at the presses. The work is easy and pleasant and the conditions are good, but as the wages are only \$7 and \$8, the employer is continually trying to replenish his labor force.

#### Cleaning and Dyeing

Pressing in the cleaning and dyeing establishments has been done by colored women for the last eight or ten years. This is done with a heavy iron and necessitates continuous standing. Six establishments were visited; five had employed them at least six years, three had employed no white pressers, and in the three others the majority were colored. In these six establishments 188 women were employed, of whom 77 per cent were colored.

The wages are usually based on piece rates, and range from \$10 to \$20 a week. Nine women interviewed averaged \$15 a week. They said that the work is seasonal and the slack period lasts from October to March, so that they may be out of work as many as six months during the year. Preference is given to colored women in this industry as they are considered the more skillful.

#### Laundries

Before the war the colored girls were assigned principally to the mangles, where the freshly washed pieces are passed between two heated rollers. Generally they stand on raised platforms for this work. With the coming of the war and the extensive adjustments in industries, opportunities to do the more skilled work were given; from mangling they advanced to machine ironing, sorting marking and hand ironing. There they have remained to a limited extent, although some of the better laundries either discharged them or so reduced their wages that they were forced to go back to their less skilled work, or to seek employment elsewhere.

Seven laundries about which information was secured, employed 310 colored women and 212 white women; one of these alone having 165 colored out of a total labor force of 200.

The wages of 24 laundry workers interviewed ranged from \$7 to \$13.50, with an average of \$10. Nine received this amount and only four a larger wage. They were said to be efficient, though somewhat slower than white girls.

#### Glass and Files

In the majority of industries the colored girl has been the marginal worker, the last to be hired and the first to be discharged. In spite of this, in some instances she has gained a permanent place, especially when she has proved herself superior to the worker displaced, as in the glass industry. Boys,

from fourteen to sixteen years of age, were formerly employed to open and close the moulds in which the blowers place the hot glass, and to carry the glass, after it has been blown, to the ovens for baking; but colored girls after trial were said to be far more reliable and capable and better able to stand the heat than were the boys, and to have better judgment. A few clean glass globes with acid. They seemed to enjoy glass factory work and to be willing to travel long distances to and from the factory. In the same way colored girls were taken on in the file factories. Here they replaced young boys as assistants to the men at the forges, and they were also scraping files.

In two glass factories employing 90 and 30 colored girls respectively, the wage is \$12 for a 48-hour week. In a file factory employing 50 colored girls on the two processes already mentioned, wages are \$12 to \$18 for a 53-1/2 hour week.

#### Jellies and Preserves

Preference was shown colored women in the canning factory visited, and the same preference was reported to be given in similar establishments because, as was said, "colored women can stand the heat." The season is very short and the hours are long. The wages paid depend upon the amount of work to be done and the labor supply available, and were said to average \$12 to \$14 a week.

#### Railroads

The railroads, offering colored women work that is similar to much of the domestic labor that has been their lot almost entirely, have employed them for a number of years, mostly as car cleaners--sweeping, mopping, washing wood-work and windows, and polishing metal fixtures. Recently they have advanced them to the position of linen clerk, in which they received soiled linen from the Pullmans, count it, keep record sheets, and bundle it for the laundry; and when it comes from the laundry, count and apportion it for each.

Wage information was obtained from the union and also from the workers; linen clerks are paid about \$95 a month, car cleaners, 45 cents an hour, or an average of \$20 to \$22 a week. About 50 women are employed for the latter work, and of these very few are not colored. The work is hard and dirty, and takes the car cleaners out about the rail yard in getting to and from cars and the central office; but the wages and hours (eight-hour day) are good, which is probably a cause for the colored workers' regularity in this trade. Of nine women interviewed, three had done this work for one year, three for two years, two for three years, and the other did not state for how long.

#### Arsenal

After the need for production in the garment department of the Arsenal had passed, some of the colored women were transferred to the cot salvage department. Here they proved themselves very efficient examining the cots, and recommending and making the necessary repairs. All of this is done standing and most of it is heavy and noisy carpentry. Metal joints and broken parts of the framework are removed and new joints and parts substituted. This had been men's work, but the colored women seem well satisfied. They like the standards of the arsenal--eight-hour day and an initial wage of \$2.50 a day with regular increases (after six months the wage is \$2.50 with a compound bonus which makes it \$3.26). There are separate lunch rooms, lockers and toilets for the colored.

#### Knitting--Sweaters and Hosiery

Knitting mills have only recently accepted colored girls and even now they seldom employ them on any operations except the least skilled. In one hosiery mill there are 30 colored girls; some press the stockings by fitting them on steam-heated forms, others match, pair and stamp them. This is all piece work and the girls average from \$7 to \$20, in a 54-hour week. One girl interviewed had worked two months as a presser and was making from \$12 to \$15 a week.

A large sweater mill, employing about 250 women, introduced colored girls as an experiment during the war and found them so satisfactory that it has retained about 50 girls for handmachine sewing. The wage for a learner is \$6 a week, and in addition she is paid the regular piece work rates; the week rate is decreased as the worker increases her piece work until she works entirely on a piece rate basis. The wages range from \$7 to \$18 with the majority receiving the lowest figures.

Another mill making the same product has a total labor force of about 60



women, of whom half are colored. It has employed them for the last five years as hand sewers, menders, button sewers, machine and operators. Twenty are considered to be efficient and reliable and to compare favorably with the white workers, but the employer expressed an opinion that it would probably be necessary to try out an additional hundred in order to secure ten more good workers. He believed that the industry had not been opened to them long enough to produce experienced workers, but, as his best colored operators had proved so successful, he was willing to train others. The girls in this factory seemed to appreciate this employer, and one said, "Conditions in the factory are splendid, and as for the employer, he is so kind you wouldn't know he was white." The initial wage was paid by the week and was only \$8; at the end of two weeks the girls were put on piece work.

A third sweater factory with 100 women employees has colored women workers as follows: 7 as winders, 13 as machine sewers, 2 as examiners, and 7 as operators. Two of the operators who have had ten months' experience average \$18 a week.

#### Elevators

The public is generally aware that, since the war, colored girls have been employed in great numbers as elevator operators in stores, apartment houses and office buildings. The median weekly wages according to records in employment agencies is \$10. This was corroborated by the two girls interviewed.

#### Restaurants and Hotels

The public is also doubtless aware that colored girls are employed in great numbers as maids and cleaners in stores, theatres and hotels, and as waitresses, cooks and pantry girls in hotels and restaurants. The maids and cleaners interviewed received from \$8 to \$13 a week. The wages of the waitresses, cooks and pantry girls were hard to estimate because of the tips received and the meals furnished. One girl who worked five hours a day received \$4.50 a week and two meals, and with her tips she averaged from \$16 to \$20 a week; another received \$8 a week and three meals for ten hours' work. Eleven girls who worked in restaurants and hotels averaged \$10 a week, including tips, and received either two or three meals a day.

#### Waste, Overgaiters, Buttons, Pickles, Millinery Trimmings, Textiles, Bakers and Private Dressmaking.

Sorting rags and feeding picker machines in waste mills, sewing buttons on overgaiters, operating button covering machines in button factories, cutting pickles in a pickle factory, winding ribbons and braid, and making ornaments in a millinery trimming shop, sorting pieces of cotton goods in a textile factory, cleaning and greasing pans in a bakery, and assisting in private dressmaking were other occupations in which they were found.

One waste mill had about 30 colored and no white girls. The only definite information that the Consumers' League has concerning the wages in this industry was secured during the war; at that time all women's wages were supposedly high, but in thirteen of these factories the wages for white and colored ranged only from \$7 to \$16.50 a week, with the colored on picker machines receiving \$11.

The girls who worked in the overgaiter factory were said by the employer to start at \$8 a week; the button factory girls received from \$7 to \$8 a week; the pickle cutters \$1 for every barrelful cut, and two barrels a day was the record of a woman with seven years' experience.

In a large establishment manufacturing millinery trimming, where about 50 women were employed, there were 25 colored women as helpers. They wound braid and ribbon on board forms, and, in the busy season, made ornaments and sewed braid. There was a flat wage of \$12 to \$14 a week, according to information secured from the employer, but according to the girls, in the busy season they were put on piece work and could make from \$12 to \$20.

One bakery employing 50 girls had 15 colored to clean pans, put icing on cakes, grease pans, and lift heavy pans in the baking room--work to which white women objected, as the employer said. They were started at \$12 a week.

One colored girl interviewed, assisted in a dressmaking establishment at \$3 a day.

#### Note

In considering the employment of colored women and in planning for the

future, it might be helpful to note that 8 of the 190 girls interviewed during this study were working as typists, stenographers, clerks or bookkeepers, with an average weekly wage of \$11. One bank, owned and operated by colored people, employs them as stenographers and clerks. With the withdrawal of men tellers for war service, women were secured and proved so successful that they have been retained. Colored women are acting as ushers and ticket sellers in theaters.

From January, 1915, to June, 1919, 81 colored girls graduated from the Philadelphia Normal School for Girls--of these, 63 were assigned to Philadelphia schools as teachers, and in November, 1919, 56 of them were still serving.

It is not uncommon to find colored women conducting businesses for themselves; they manage small stores, run dressmaking establishments and hair-dressing parlors. To the better educated colored girls "nursing" is one of the few professions open. Two Philadelphia hospitals that are maintained for the colored people have colored nurses and the doctors report that they "are fortunate in having excellent ones." Some social work among colored people is now being carried on by trained colored women.

#### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND THE COLORED WORKER

The American Federation of Labor has gone on record in respect to the colored worker. In June, 1919, in Atlantic City, at their annual convention, they voted to open the doors of all labor organizations to the colored. It is to be noted that hitherto they had often been discriminated against, and that they had had to plead for recognition. One colored worker is reported to have said on the convention floor:

"If you can take in immigrants who cannot speak the English language, why can't you take in the Negro, who has been loyal to you from Washington to the battlefields of France."

In the convention of 1920, held in Montreal, the Federation again discussed the question. Apparently some local unions were still opposed to the application of the principle adopted in 1919.

Three industries open to colored women, the Arsenal, the railroads and the garment trades, stand out as having good conditions, opportunities for advancement, or good wages. These have collective bargaining. Recognition to the right of its employees throughout the country to organize is given by the United States Government, and is expressed in the Federal Employees' Union. The colored arsenal workers, therefore, have the right to collective bargaining. They are not affiliated with their union, but they work under the same conditions as those who are. The colored railroad workers are 100 per cent organized, and belong to the Railroad Coach and Car Cleaners' Local No. 16702, which is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. This is composed almost wholly of colored, and the officers are colored men and women.

The garment industries have strong organizations and they admit colored. Shirt workers belong to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, which is not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and the others, to Local No. 15 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. During the war one local reported that colored women were in 50 per cent of its shops. However, it cannot be said that any large percentage of these women are union members; only 14 of the 54 interviewed by the Consumers' League were. Sixteen of these 54 women worked in union shops and averaged \$19 a week; 38 worked in non-union shops and averaged \$13. Unquestionably those in union shops fared better as to wages.

The feeling on the part of the union that the unorganized colored are undercutting them and are undermining their attainments in the trade in general, is borne out by the many instances of the colored used to break strikes and to displace union girls. One employer admitted he had secured all colored workers "because the white girls go out on strike so often." The girls in his shop are averaging \$6 a week less than those in union shops. On their part, the colored realize that they frequently get their jobs because of these conditions. The pressers, in a factory where all the operators were union members, wanted to affiliate with the union. When the foreman overheard their plans, he threatened to discharge them if they did, and to give their jobs to white girls.

One girl continued to agitate for collective bargaining and was told not to return for work. The union, however, compelled the employer to reopen her job to her.

There still lurks in the minds of some colored women a suspicion of the union's insincerity, for, as one girl said, "They never ask us to join except when they want to strike;" and there is always the fear that they may not receive justice in the union. Furthermore, they realize that much of the social intercourse coming through the organization and supplying necessary recreation to the workers, is either not open to them, or, if open, holds no inducements. On the whole, however, there is approval of the union, for it is recognized as the only means of protection against low wages, long hours, and particularly against differences in the wage scales. All of the women interviewed not only knew about unionism, but held opinions either for or against, and were ready with their reasons to support their opinions. A few of the girls were not aware that the unions were open to them.

Those girls who were members appreciated the protection of the union, the increase in wages they had received, and the opportunity to be on an equal footing with the white girls in regard to wages. Only two girls made complaints --one that the union gave "all show to the white girls," and another that "the union did not help," because since she joined she had not been able to make more than \$12.50 a week and "that is not a living wage." One woman was a most enthusiastic union member and thought that every colored girl should join; she herself had organized several shops for the union. Some of the organized girls felt that the unions might do more successful work if they approached the colored girls in the trade through colored organizers and if they delegated colored chairladies for colored workers.

#### THE COLORED WORKER

It is a question how far some of those now in industry can be classified as industrial workers, because they alternate between factory and house work. One girl can be cited as typical of this group. Earning only \$7 to \$9 a week and paying \$6.50 of this for room and board, she was continually running short in her budget. At such times she would return to domestic work and save, eventually seeking factory work again. Then there was the girl who worked in a candy factory for \$8 a week, left for a boarding house position at \$8 a week and meals, and at the time interviewed had returned to the candy factory, saying she liked a nine and one-quarter hour day, and Saturday afternoons and Sundays off.

The majority of the industrial workers have come from domestic service, 54 per cent of those interviewed having done house work at some time; only a few said they would consider going back and this was because they liked receiving room and board which made their real wages higher. An equal number of girls were strongly opposed to domestic work because "the work was too hard," "the wages were so low," and "they work you too hard for no money." One girl said she felt so strongly on the subject that she would rather starve than ever do it again. The majority of the girls did not object to the work itself, but preferred the freedom of the factory, the release from a personal boss, the definite and shorter hours, and the free nights, Sundays and holidays. The latter were given in almost every instance as the reasons for preferring factory work.

#### Budgets

The most salient fact emerging from a study of colored women in industry is that with few exceptions they are receiving appallingly low wages. Fifty per cent of 177 women interviewed received \$10 a week or less. (Ten who worked in restaurants, and the three who were waitresses in department stores, are omitted because their wages could not be estimated on account of irregular meals given).

Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have followed England and Australia and New Zealand in establishing by law the right of women workers to a wage sufficient to cover the cost of the necessities of life. The most recent wage set by the Minimum Wage Board of the District of Columbia is \$16.50, and applies to women workers (white and colored) in restaurants and hotels and allied industries. Eighty per cent of the colored women interviewed received less than this amount.

Because of the low wages, the Consumers' League was concerned with what could be done with so little and what was the result. Forty girls were found living away from home, and with only two exceptions, they rented rooms with the privilege of using the kitchen, where they prepared their own food. This is a common practice among the colored; often several families, sometimes related, live in one house, each furnishing and preparing its own food in the common kitchen.

Thirty-one of these girls gave estimates of the amount spent for rent and food. Rents ranged from \$1 to \$3 a week, and the average and median were \$2. This is 65 cents less than the average amount asked in 1919 for single rooms for white women, according to information taken from the files of the United States House Registry Service with regard to rooms costing \$3.50 a week and under.

The cost of food ranged from \$2.50 (one girl insisted that she did not and could not afford to spend more than \$2.50 a week for food) to \$7.50 a week. The most frequent sum and also the average was \$5. Room and board averaged \$7, \$2.30 less than the amount accepted by the District of Columbia Minimum Wage Conference in 1919-1920 as the minimum allowance for room and board.

For seventy-two girls, who lived at home and who paid a certain amount to the family purse each week, the median amount contributed was \$5, and the amounts ranged from \$1.50 to \$12.50 a week. Twenty-five girls gave no certain amount to the family. They either contributed different amounts each week, or gave when the family needed it, or put the entire amount into the family pocket book and received room, board, clothes and sundries (all of which usually exceeded the amount given) in return.

Of the married women who did not make a definite contribution each week, thirteen gave various sums; twelve gave all for family expenses; five saved their money, putting it in the bank to meet some future emergency, or invested it in a building and loan association; or used it to help buy a home.

It was noticeable that when the women were paid higher wages their standard of living rose accordingly. Twenty-six candy workers, whose wages averaged \$9 a week, averaged only \$5 a week for room and board, or \$4.50 for contributions to the family; those in the laundries, another low paid industry, averaged only \$10 a week and paid \$5.50 for room and board, or gave \$5 a week to the family. On the other hand, fifty-four garment workers, who received on an average of \$15 a week, paid (on an average) \$7.50 a week for board and room, or contributed \$7 a week to the family. The nine women who worked on the railroad and received \$22 a week, paid \$8.50 a week for their room and board, or gave \$9.50 a week to the family.

It is an interesting fact that 182 of these girls interviewed carried insurance--only 8 did not--and the majority of the policies were for sickness and accidents. Forty-six per cent had one policy, 32 per cent had two, and 14 per cent had three, 4 per cent had four, and 5 per cent had five. The premiums paid ranged from 5 cents to \$2.85 a week. Half of the girls paid 38 cents a week or more.

Those girls who were receiving low wages and who were forced to economize usually did so by curtailing their expenditures for food, thereby lowering their vitality. A machine operator whose wage averaged \$10 a week was living with a brother and a sister and was paying \$1.75 a week for rent, and 35 cents a week for insurance. She had been sending her fifteen-year-old son, who could not be kept in school here, to a school in Virginia, for which she was paying \$17 a month. Her sister, who earned \$17 a week, had been helping her. She said they tried to reduce expenses by cutting down on their food. "We never bother about breakfast, but we eat one or two sandwiches for lunch, and then we get a little something to eat when we come home at night."

A girl who had received from \$7 to \$11.50 in the last year and a half, paid \$1.50 for her room and \$4 a week for her food, which she herself prepared. When asked what kind of food she had she replied, "Oh, I have lots of bread and tea and coffee," and she found it difficult to think of anything else.

Another girl who received \$10 a week as a wrapper in a department store, paid \$3 a week for her room and was able to get her board for \$4 by helping with the housework. Even so she found it impossible to get along if she did not do extra work at night--she did typewriting at 30 cents an hour as often as her health would permit.

With most of the girls the struggle to pay the room rent, board, insurance, and carfare is hard enough, but securing clothes is an even greater problem.

The League interviewed a southern girl who had worked four months in a munition factory at \$16 to \$20 a week when the armistice was signed. An illness wiped out her savings that had been intended to pay her railroad fare home, and she found nothing more lucrative than work in an embroidery shop that paid \$6 at the start and increased to \$11. Her room cost \$3 a week, her groceries \$5, her insurance 25 cents and carfare 60 cents. When new shoes, or new clothes, were bought, she allowed the room rent to lapse for a week, and borrowed extra money from her girl friend (returning it when her friend wished to buy clothes).

Purchasing clothes on "store orders" is a method pursued by some girls. Credit for a certain amount of money is bought from an agent. This credit is honored in a long list of stores, and is very expensive--it is reported that as much as \$5 is paid for the use of \$30.

#### Schooling and Training

The colored women have been in industry too short a time, perhaps to draw conclusions about education on the one hand and progress and opportunities open to them on the other. As will be shown later on, certain vocations are open to them as to others, only on the basis of education. Many take advantage of this and, having acquired the requisite education, become teachers, nurses, stenographers and typists, and clerks in banks run by the colored. However, the placement of colored girls who have had training is extremely difficult because of the limited numbers of establishments employing colored. This is a deterrent to all, but the most ambitious and persistent, from special training.

Of the girls interviewed, 25 per cent had had high school, normal school, or Southern college training. Twenty-nine per cent with a majority of them from the South, had never reached the sixth grade. Ninety-nine had gone to school in Philadelphia, and of these 25 per cent, started to work before they were 16. Four girls said they had had courses in domestic science (mostly in high schools), 9 in millinery, and 2 in power machine operating in a trade school.

According to records in the office of the Bureau of Compulsory Education about 40,000 general working certificates and 13,000 vacation working certificates were issued to all children in the last two years. To colored children only 19 general certificates--3 for restaurants, 12 for factories, and 3 for general housework--were issued, and 8 vacation certificates--1 for a store, 1 for a restaurant, and 6 for factories. This small number of certificates issued may be due in part to the general retardation of colored children in the schools. Many of them do not reach the sixth grade before they are 16 years of age and after that they are not required to secure working certificates. Very few colored children are in the continuation schools where they have an opportunity to continue with their education up to the age of sixteen years while employed.

Those girls who had had more than an eighth grade education were found in candy factories, restaurants, laundries, offices, in clerical positions, department stores, on the railroads, and in garment factories, in fact in almost all the industries in which those with less education were employed. Their wages ranged from \$7 to \$39, but the median wage was only \$10. For those who did not go beyond the eighth grade the range of wages was from \$6 to \$33, also with a median wage of \$10. It seems a great pity that more schooling has not repaid with higher wages, and it is surprising that the colored girls continue beyond the required grades in the face of such a discouraging prospect.

One girl who had had four years of normal training and who had taught school for three years in another state found employment in a candy factory at \$7 a week. At the end of two years she was making \$10. Another girl, 23 years old, with three years high school training was working in a laundry for \$10. Other examples of like nature could be cited.

Some, not all, of the trade schools of the city are closed to colored; but few colored girls have taken advantage of those which are open to them. In the Philadelphia Girls' Trade School, in 1919, 13 out of the 157 students in the day school are colored; 9 are taking the elementary dressmaking course; 2, the power machine operating course; and 2, the intermediate and advanced dressmaking course. In this school there has also been a night class in power machine operating for colored girls who are employed during the day.

An industrial school for colored, with an enrollment of 130 girls, offers courses in dressmaking, plain sewing, needlework, tailoring, printing, stenography and academic work. Recently a hosiery company has installed knitting machines here and instruction is given to about forty girls. A small weekly wage is paid.

#### How She Finds Employment

In comparison with the opportunities of white women in industry, those of the colored are very limited. Out of the long lists in the advertisements of the newspaper columns, only those places are open to them that specifically say so, and sometimes for days and days none will be so listed. Of those who stated how their positions were obtained, 63 per cent obtained their jobs, or heard about them, through other employees; 29 per cent, answered advertisements in the paper and only 1 per cent had obtained positions through an agency.

The following table will explain more in detail:

Positions obtained	Number
All	190
Through Employees	89
"    Advertisements	41
"    Sign on factory	4
"    Trade School	1
"    Union	3
"    Agency	2
"    Civil Service	1
Not stated	49

#### Conditions in Factories in Which She is Working

No general statement can be made about the character of the factories open to colored women. It is unfortunately true that there are many buildings that are old, poorly lighted, and poorly constructed, and have narrow hallways and stairs. In these buildings it is not uncommon to find poor ventilation, insanitary toilets, and no provision for dressing rooms. Formerly, the most recent immigrants found work in these until better opportunities came along and they moved on, to be replaced by others less fortunate than they. The colored have been among the less fortunate in recent years. They are ready, however, to join those in pursuit of higher standards of working conditions, just as soon as the opportunity presents itself, for they are very conscious of the differences between these shops and better ones, and they talk about the subject and bring it up for discussion when gathered together in their meetings.

On the other hand, some of the newest and most up-to-date factories are employing colored women. The fifty-four garment factories visited were rated as follows: Sixteen were superior; twenty-six, average; eight, rather inferior; and four, inferior.

Some of the tobacco factories were crowded into old buildings, with poor seating accommodations and with much tobacco lying about to be stripped. A candy factory referred to in this study, had conditions that were objectionable enough to convince one that if the health and comfort of the workers is not important enough for the community to be concerned about, at least the product which is for consumption should be--some of these conditions were insanitary toilets, lack of proper and adequate washing facilities, the substitution of petticoats for towels, and the custom of returning chocolate, dropped onto the floor, to the vats for further use.

Aside from the health hazards existing in insanitary factories, there is this added harm to colored women in general who must work--it is almost impossible to open up new opportunities of work in the same neighborhood. Poor factories attract, or at least hold, a poor type of worker, and the impression created by these girls seems to affect the minds of the neighboring employers to such an extent that they are not willing to offer colored women opportunities. Perhaps this point can be made clearer by a definite illustration: A manager with a good plant was asked by a colored employment agency to try augmenting

his depleted force with colored women, but he positively refused to consider the proposition on the ground that he had seen enough for himself. As a matter of fact, he had seen the poor grade girls who work in a most undesirable plant.

The garment factories that are organized have a forty-four-hour week, and some of them concentrate this time into five days a week; unorganized shops work longer. The railroad and arsenal workers have an eight-hour day. Pennsylvania still has a fifty-four-hour law, and many of the other industries worked to the limit allowed by law. It is to be noted that in seeking for causes of labor turnover, the girls very often said "the hours are too long."

#### Health

In considering the colored women as workers in this first study of the subject, the Consumers' League thinks it advisable to call attention to the report of the Health Insurance Commission of Pennsylvania, 1919, pp. 59 and 60. In a section captioned, "Extent of Sickness by Color, Race and Location," it says:

"The negro population has a higher sickness rate than the white, according to available evidence. Since negroes from the south are at present migrating to Pennsylvania in large numbers, this means the possibility of a great increase in the sickness problem of the state, particularly during the period of acclimation when pre-disposition to disease is markedly shown. . . .

"Three of the seven districts covered by the Philadelphia Survey were inhabited mainly by negroes, and, while the average sickness rate found in the survey was 4.28 per cent, the rates in these districts were 4.45, 9.20 and 3.87 per cent, respectively. The abnormal rate of 9.30 was in a district of negroes fresh from the south, receiving low wages and living under crowded insanitary conditions. Dr. Miller, who had the survey in charge, felt that unless drastic measures to improve the health conditions were taken in this neighborhood, there was danger of an epidemic which might menace the city."

"If we consider mortality statistics as an indication of the extent of sickness, the same high rate among negroes appears. In 1916 the death rate in Pennsylvania from all causes was 14.3 per 1,000 white persons as against 23.6 for the colored population."

"The rate among negroes in the cities was about 15 per cent higher than among those in the rural districts. Analyzed by diseases, the greatest differences appear in organic heart disease, pneumonia and tuberculosis in all its forms, where the rates for the colored are more than double those for the white population. Tuberculosis of the lungs, for instance, had a rate in 1916 of 105.0 per 100,000 for the white population, but a rate of 389.3 for the colored. Other forms of tuberculosis showed rates of 7.7 vs. 16.3 and 9.4 vs. 25.8, more than twice the rate for the white population in each case. Communicable diseases, diabetes, cancer and suicide are apparently slightly less frequent among the colored than among the white."

"The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company made for the Commission a special compilation of claim-rates in Pennsylvania among Industrial Policy Holders, classifying the insured by color, over a period of three years--1915, 1916, 1917. Rates are given for twenty-six localities in the state, in addition to fourteen districts in Philadelphia and four in Pittsburgh. In practically every instance, the rates are from 50 to 100 per cent higher for the colored than for the white policy-holders. For the entire state the claim rates were 12.4 for the white, in 1917, and 15.7 for the colored. . . . These claim rates, of course, must be viewed in the light of varying sex and age characteristics of the several groups, and of the degree to which the company has developed its Nursing Service in the district."

"Examining the claim rates by cause of death, the same differences appear as are evident from the general mortality statistics of the state. Deaths from typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and pneumonia, show decidedly higher rates for the colored, while communicable diseases, cancer, cerebral hemorrhage and external causes are somewhat lower."

#### CRITICISMS BY EMPLOYERS

As has been pointed out, colored women workers have run the gamut of criticism from "satisfactory" to "incompetent," concerning the quality of work done. However, on the railroads, where the colored have been employed

for many years, very few white women are employed; the garment industry is anxious to have experienced workers or people whom it can train; in certain processes in cleaning and dyeing, and in making cigars colored women are employed almost exclusively; and many establishments which employed them as an experiment are retaining them as a permanent force. In some factories judgments of "stubborn," "lazy," "indifferent" and "slow" have been passed. Many employers reported that colored workers needed more instruction and more careful supervision than white girls, and, as one, who was well satisfied with his colored workers, said, "one must be willing to teach a colored girl, not once, but several times." Another reported it difficult to train colored girls because they were so apt to take offense at correction, thinking they were being corrected merely because they were colored. Several complained that colored girls were lacking in ambition, and, therefore, did not make speedy workers, and for this reason they were put on piece work, so that the responsibility for making good wages was left to them.

One, who employed during the war about twice as many colored girls as he now has, said, "Most of the colored girls did abominable work, and only because of the stress of war did their work pass--and some of the girls made as much as \$40 a week." He felt that making the readjustments which would result in better work and in wages more commensurate with the grade of work, would be difficult.

But the most general criticism is that the colored women are irregular. "They are late in getting to work;" "they do not come to the factory every day;" and "they do not stay long in any factory." A garment manufacturer had on his force a colored girl who had been with him three years, and who, in that time, had never worked a full week, although she had been offered, in addition to her \$20 wage, a bonus of \$1 a week if she did so. "Their work is all right, but I cannot rely upon them" said another. "I may have some special work to get out on Saturday morning and not a presser [he had six] will show up. Monday morning, when I ask them why they didn't come, one will say, 'I had to do my marketing for Sunday;' another, 'I had to buy a hat,' and another, 'I had to do my washing.'" Once an employer reported that although he had more colored than white, and he found the grade of their work satisfactory, he considered it necessary to employ two white girls who could operate any machine, so that absences among the colored workers would not interfere with continuous processes.

Among the other reasons given by the employers for this irregularity were the following: "They stay out two or three days a week to do 'day's work' to make more money;" "the married women [and there is a large percentage in this class] stay out to do their own house work;" "the colored women are content to live on their earnings of a few days, if they are paid well;" and "sickness."

These shortcomings are in no sense to be overlooked, but it does seem that in justice to the workers a word should be said about the peculiarities of operation and management in many of the industries employing colored. For instance, these industries are themselves irregular; they are "seasonal" in character; they have regular periods of great activity and then regular periods of slackness or no work whatever. This is particularly true in the garment industries, in cleaning and dyeing, and in the manufacture of candy. While this study was in progress, some garment shops had been closed five months, some four and three months, and some had only part-time work each week for several months. The workers interviewed corroborated the statement made in the report on "Wages of Candy Makers in Philadelphia," that this industry has one slack period after Christmas and another in summer.

How far then are occupations that are seasonal in character responsible, if not for the irregularity of workers, at least for a lack of appreciation of regularity.

#### ARE THE COLORED GETTING A SQUARE DEAL?

The colored complain most frequently of the difference in wage scales for the white and colored employees, and in many cases their complaints are well founded. In one candy factory the colored girls are started at \$8 and \$9, and the white girls at \$9 and \$10, and the colored girls are given the harder and more unpleasant work to do. A white investigator, who worked in the factory, was told by a forelady, "The colored girls start at \$8 a week; of course, they wouldn't pay a white girl that." That same difference seems to exist with raises, for some colored girls who have been there a year and a half are still



receiving the initial wage, while the investigator received a raise of \$1 a week on the second day.

The manager of a large lithographing establishment, that was greatly in need of labor, stated that the initial wage was \$10 a week. But the colored girls who applied for positions there were offered \$7. When the employer was questioned concerning the discrepancy in wages he stated that that was the wage paid to white girls and he really was not aware of the amount paid to colored girls, although in one department they were doing the same work. He said he was ready to assure any colored girl that her wages would be rapidly increased if she showed a willingness to stay. And yet one of his colored girls interviewed started at \$7 a week and did not receive a raise until three months later, and then she had to ask for it; another worked five months before her wage was increased to \$9. A white girl who started at \$10 was given a raise of \$1 after two weeks. Colored girls had worked for months as assistants to the pressfeeders, but when a vacancy came as pressfeeder, a white girl who had been there only a few weeks was given the job. The employer apparently did not realize that there might be any connection between this and the exceedingly high turnover among his colored labor, and the continual friction between the white and colored in his shop.

A large department store replaced white girls, receiving \$12.50 a week, by colored girls at \$10 a week, in spite of the fact that the head of this store took time to come into the workroom to shake the girls' hands and to assure them that they were doing their work quite as efficiently as their predecessors.

One employer, when asked if his colored workers were as satisfactory as his white workers, said, "Oh, yes, even more so, for white women would not have the patience to sit there and work for as little as they [the colored] are paid."

Few firms are as willing to admit the difference in wages, as was the laundry that, applying to an employment agency for colored women, wrote, "Girls without any laundry experience are paid as follows to start: white girls, \$12 up per week; colored girls, \$9 to \$10 per week."

Other unfair distinctions are said to be made; for instance, they are often given the oldest and hardest machines to operate; they are not permitted to do piece work, which would increase their earnings; they are not allowed to work after they have earned a certain amount; in one case they have to go downstairs for their materials, while the white girls have materials brought to them; they have poorer workroom conditions and sanitary provisions; they have the darker and more poorly ventilated section, the smallest locker space, the worst sanitary provisions; and they are discriminated against in the matter of rest rooms. A laundry that employs 165 colored women and 35 white women has a large rest room for the white and a small one for the colored, and some factories that have rest rooms for the white have none for the colored.

On the first point a girl who had been making \$11.50 a week testified that when she was given a better machine, making possible an increase of \$5.50 in her earnings, the white girls objected and the employer moved her back to her old machine. Another girl complained that when new machines were bought they were given to white girls and the discarded machines were transferred to the colored working in another building belonging to the same employer.

#### WILL THE COLORED AND WHITE WORK TOGETHER?

To the employer who is introducing colored labor, one of the most important questions is, will the white and the colored work side by side? They have heard rumors, or they have been told something that leads them to question. Perhaps the story reached them of the knitting mill that was in dire need of workers during the war and brought a government official to state the need and to ask for the approval of the workers to admit the colored. As the story was given to the writer at the time, no complaints were heard and the official departed, thinking the men and women were willing to work with the colored. They were not, as a matter of fact, and said so very plainly, and no colored were employed. It should be added that this neighborhood once had been the scene of an unfortunate strife between white and colored.

As might be expected, the testimony of the employers was contradictory. Some said their white employees would not work in the same room, on the same floor, or in the same factory with colored girls; yet other employers reported that white and colored worked together and that there had been no trouble.

The working arrangements in fifty-four garment shops were studied. In two,

colored only were employed; in twenty-four, the white and colored girls worked together; and in twenty-nine, they were separated. The reasons given for the separation were, in fifteen cases, that they were not doing the same kind of work and were necessarily placed in different parts of the shop; in twelve, that the white girls refused to work with the colored; and in two, that it would avoid trouble.

Some firms which have had colored or which now employ only one or two to do the least skilled work, or to do cleaning, reported that they would not employ colored again, or that they would not employ more, because it was impossible to secure the best class of white girls if they had colored. Many employers who tried colored and white girls together, have now separated them and find that the friction is eliminated in this way.

An employer who had colored and white girls working together with no trouble find it advisable to have separate dressing rooms, "Because," he said, "if anything is missing the white girls are certain to blame it on the colored girls."

"When the colored girls first came I had to be continually on the job to settle disputes," said one man, "now I have no trouble." He said he had taken pains to prevent friction from the very first.

Not only are colored and white working side by side, but in a small candy factory white girls were found working under the direction of a colored forelady. The manager said the white girls rather objected at first, until he explained that she was the only one who knew all the processes and it was necessary to have someone who could teach the others. No trouble was experienced after that.

The almost unanimous opinion among employers is that where colored workers are in a department by themselves the most satisfactory arrangement is to have a colored rather than a white forewoman.

The fact that that colored and white girls are working side by side is proof conclusive that they can do it. A great deal depends upon the manner in which they are introduced, whether they are brought in as equal workers or whether, as the girls suspect, they come as possible undercutters; and upon the attitude of the employers toward them. Discrimination on the part of the employers means antagonism on the part of the employees.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### A.--For Workers

1. Since the criticism is made with apparent justification that colored women are irregular in getting to work on time and in working a full week, effort should be made to correct these faults if the colored people expect to enjoy equal opportunities in industry with the white.

2. Workers should try to ascertain conditions within an establishment before working there, especially sanitary and wage conditions.

3. Since higher wages and better hours seem to prevail in shops having collective bargaining, it would seem wise to endeavor to work in union shops, and to affiliate with the organization.

##### B.--For Employers

1. To those employing colored workers it is recommended that they make no discrimination solely on account of color, but allow them equal pay for equal work, and as good machines, sanitary facilities and opportunities for advancement as the white workers of the same grade.

2. To those contemplating employing them, it is recommended that they should not judge all colored workers by those who work in factories of the poorest sort.

##### C.--For Organizations, Public and Private

1. The Consumers' League especially begs consideration of the section of this study bearing on the sickness record of the colored, as given by the Pennsylvania Health Insurance Commission, and recommends that a program be formulated for the improvement of the health of the colored population.

2. It calls attention to the need for raising the standard of education among the colored.

3. Since 50 per cent of the women interviewed for this study received \$10 a week or less, while the amount necessary to cover the essential cost of living for a single woman has been variously estimated at from \$8.53, in 1914, to \$16.76, in 1919, and since thirteen states and the District of Columbia

have prevented such impossible situations by legislation, the Consumers' League recommends that the next Pennsylvania Legislature enact a Minimum Wage Law.

4. The interest in the progress that colored women are making is great enough to suggest that it would be most desirable to have the United States Department of Labor make a comprehensive report for the United States.

## Schedules of Factories and Women by Industries

INDUSTRIES	NUMBER		
	All	Factory	Women
All	298	108	190
Garment	118	64	54
Caps	1	1	
Quilts	2	1	1
Embroideries	6	1	5
Tobacco	14	9	5
Department Stores	17	5	12
Candy	28	2	26
Paper boxes and paper novelties	9	4	5
Cleaning and dyeing	15	6	9
Laundries	25	1	24
Glass	3	2	1
Files	2	1	1
Jellies and preserves	1	1	
Railroads	9		9
Arsenal	3	1	2
Knitting	10	4	6
Elevators	2		2
Restaurants, etc.	14		14
Waste	2	1	1
Overgaiters	1	1	
Buttons	1	1	
Pickles	1		1
Millinery trimmings	3	1	2
Textiles	1		1
Bakeries	1	1	
Private dressmaking	1		1
Clerks	8		8

## Ages of Women Interviewed

AGE INTERVALS	Number of women at each age
All	190
16 and under 17	5
17 " " 18	15
18 " " 19	17
19 " " 20	17
20 " " 21	18
21 " " 22	12
22 " " 23	13
23 " " 24	12
24 " " 25	8
25 to 29	29
30 " 34	25
35 " 39	13
40 " 44	3
45 " 49	1
50 " 54	1
Age not stated	1

## Weekly Wages Received by Women Interviewed\*

WEEKLY WAGES	Number of women receiving each wage
All	177
\$ 6 and under \$7	1
7 " " 8	4
8 " " 9	17
9 " " 10	26
10 " " 11	42
11 " " 12	8
12 " " 13	13
13 " " 14	13
14 " " 15	8
15 " " 16	4
16 " " 17	5
17 " " 18	6
18 " " 19	8
19 " " 20	4
20 " " 21	5
21 " " 22	1
22 " " 23	1
23 " " 24	3
24 " " 25	3
25 " " 26	2
27 " " 28	1
33 " " 34	1
39 " " 40	1

Median Weekly Wage \$10.00

\*Ten who worked in restaurants, and three who worked in department stores as waitresses are omitted.

## School Grades Completed by Women Interviewed

GRADES	Number of women who completed each grade
All	190
1st	1
2d	2
3d	4
4th	13
5th	16
6th	22
7th	26
8th	48
1st year high school	11
2d " " "	9
3d " " "	13
4th " " "	13
Normal	6
College (Southern)	4
Grade not stated	2

Colored Women as Industrial Workers in Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Consumers' League of Eastern Pennsylvania, 1920). Adapted from the original in the U.S. Department of Labor Library.

## 2. MAKING OVER POOR WORKERS

By Helen Sayre

*The Nachmann Company were having considerable difficulty with their colored help. They sought counsel of the Chicago Urban League which was instrumental in placing Mrs. Sayre to do the necessary work at that factory. Mrs. Sayre had had previous experience in welfare work, being introduced by the League into the Montgomery Ward & Company unit where she was Welfare Secretary for 600 girls. When that office closed she became Examiner of Women in the Industrial Department of the Chicago Urban League. After two year's service the League made possible her appointment with the Nachmann Company where she is putting in practical operation the League's plan of industrial adjustment of Negro labor.*

Upon assuming the position of Welfare and Labor Administrator for Nachmann Company, manufacturers of spring filled cushions used for automobile seats, mattresses and furniture, we felt that it was very necessary to take inventory of all conditions that in the final analysis told their story on the production sheet.

The girls were promptly taken into confidence and told just why we were there and what we hoped to accomplish with their cooperation. This appeared to establish a bond of friendliness and general understanding.

To further the plan of contact, a personal inventory was taken using cards to register name, address, age, education, length of service, number of times rehired, as well as matters of general interest. By this means we succeeded in gaining a more accurate slant on the personnel on hand as well as their general attitude towards their work.

In assuming charge of employment there also devolved the responsibility of adjustments and discipline. We advised with the superintendents and forewomen on special details of the work. From the first it was aimed to work through the heads of the departments so that there might be neither misunderstanding nor conflict of management. In a general survey we noted conditions of dressing rooms, first-aid equipment, general appearance of the girls at work, and lunch conveniences. Physical adjustments were made simple by the splendid co-operation from the company in making such changes as seemed desirable for improvement.

The situation at this factory had developed the very critical question of continuing colored workers. The large labor turn-over, lack of punctuality and general irregularity in attendance of the colored workers had created a bad situation. There was only one day in the week when the factory could count on getting out full production and that was pay day. The day after pay day there would be a falling off of 50 per cent in attendance.

The most important task, it seemed, was that of developing in the worker's mind her personal responsibility to become a regular and efficient employee and of showing her the requirements and standards of satisfactory service. Next in importance was the question of wages, because it is only reasonable to assume that if a girl is to be stimulated to put out good work she must have tangible encouragement in her pay envelope.

These two things had to be done promptly. But the question of wages was bound up in the efficiency of work. The sewing of covers, inserting of springs and tying are paid for on a piece work basis, which is just, and to my mind is the most satisfactory basis of the wage scale. By posting the progressive wage scale of some particular efficient operator each week, by posting the list of girls making above \$20.00 a week a friendly rivalry for rank has been aroused. By calling attention to some of their shortcomings in a general way, interviewing certain delinquents, and putting up bulletins to inform them of the amount of production each day, we have decidedly improved these records, and production has actually increased in the sewing department from an average of 250,000 to a peak one day of 367,000. Further, a more regular production has been accomplished and full production for four days of the week out of the six. The peak of production for the week has shown on the days before and after pay day as well as on that day.

At the present time there are over 600 colored employers. There are also both white and colored employees working harmoniously together in each department. One floor is in charge of a white forewoman and another in charge of a

colored forewoman. The spirit of co-operation seems to hold good throughout the factory. We have here a splendid demonstration of what can be done when the officials are disposed to be impartial.

A system of rules is being established now that will eliminate entirely the indifferent worker. No girl who is not up to standard in workmanship and does not respect rules of punctuality and attendance will be retained. This class of workers is largely responsible for low averages in industry by colored workers. At the present time we feel we have had some degree of success. If we can educate the workers as well as give them evidences of appreciation for loyalty and good work, we have gone a long way towards making factory work attractive and colored workers efficient. It is a task but we believe it can be done.

*Opportunity*, 1 (February, 1923): 17-18.

### 3. THE NEGRO WORKING WOMAN

#### What She Faces in Making a Living

By Mary Louise Williams

My working career started a few years back in a small city in New York State, with a high school education. After graduation, being filled with the enthusiasm of youth, I naturally turned my thoughts to "something different."

I applied to several offices for employment, seeking even as inferior a position as addressing envelopes. At every place I met with disappointment. None felt they could use colored help in that capacity.

By this time I felt somewhat like a peacock who had looked at his feet. Now, I worked around at odd jobs and housework until one day I received a surprise.

Through the kind intercession of the Vice-President of a manufactory I was given an opportunity in its perfume department. I was to act as forelady and stock clerk. I made good. The management, being so well pleased, doubled my salary after a year's service. No question of color ever arose. In the course of a few more months I was walking home with a co-worker and met my mother. Naturally I was proud of her and wanted my friends to meet her. At the corner, as had been our habit, we separated. Next morning I was summoned to the office. You can imagine my surprise upon finding my services were no longer needed. Mr. Vice-President softened it as best he could: "There is no fault with your work, but the girls will not work with a Negro. We would gladly keep you if we could, but it is better to lose one girl than to lose twenty."

On another occasion I answered an advertisement in the paper worded thus: "Wanted: a young colored girl, high school graduate preferred. Apply Dey's Department Store." I dressed with care expecting to find at least a saleslady's opening. Just picture for yourself my chagrin upon learning they desired a bootblack in the ladies' rest room! The reason they wanted an educated girl was to keep their wealthy customers from coming in contact with objectionable Negroes. I had no chance to refuse the job because Mr. T. said I looked too much like a Caucasian and he could not use me. He finally hired a high school graduate who had trained two years for a teacher. Is it not a pity that a colored girl must be educated to qualify as a bootblack?

Finding no real openings for me in the clerical line, I turned my attention to shop work. I did this for three reasons. First, it gave me more time for myself than housework. Second, I received a more liberal reward per hour for my services. Third, it placed me on a more equal basis with the other workers although I needed no education other than to read and write. At this work I made just enough money to make both ends meet and sometimes I had to stretch pretty yard to do so, especially when we had a holiday. Naturally I received a little less pay than the white workers. The difference in pay was due possibly to the open shop. In this city there is no colored garment workers' union and the white unions do not take the Negro in. In the shops the Negro has no chance of advancement.

I heard so much about Cleveland. I went there and found conditions more favorable, due probably to the fact that the Negro himself was more enterprising. Here I found a Negro Vaudeville employing all Negro help. There were also colored doctors, lawyers, clubs, hotels, rooming houses, ice cream parlors, drug stores, and restaurants. These were all using colored help. The Phyllis Wheatly Home and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People took an active part in placing girls in suitable positions. Still there were many girls uncared for.

I happened to be one of these and took a job to wash glasses and silver in a white hotel. I found hotel conditions here very much as they were at home. Though we ate the same food as the whites, we ate at the dishwashers' table, men and women eating together. Here I worked nine hours a day for forty dollars a month. Out of this paid carfare twice a day, for one meal a day, four dollars a week for a room, and one dollar for laundry. This left me very little for the pleasures of life. I was about discouraged when the assistant steward was taken up in the draft. After this the head steward had quite a job to keep this place filled. So I braved the lion in his den and the result was I became the assistant. It was really a man's job. I had to take care of the storeroom and coolers also to keep track of the cost of keeping up the various parts of the hotel. I probably would be there yet only peace was declared and with it came the return of the former assistant steward. This position afforded me so many luxuries of life that it showed me what a joy work would be to the Negro woman if given a position and salary instead of a job and wages.

Being a little homesick I returned. Somehow I expected to see conditions changed. With the exception of a few elevator operators, girls to dust china and furniture, two or three girls to rearrange stock behind white salesladies, and a few more women working in shops, I found no change. Oh, yes, I found three women working as salesladies, but as these were "passing" they mean less than nothing in the history of the Negro Woman.

Not being able to find anything that pleased me I turned my attention to canvassing. Even now I feel a loathing for this work. If I called at the front door I was directed to the rear. In many instances the door was shut in my face before I could make my errand known. Others treated me well, but that expression of incredulity upon seeing a Negro agent spoke louder than words. Some business men would give me an audience, sometimes with an order. Others received me with so much attention I felt they thought my magazines were only a camouflage.

And since there is a general tendency to expand the field of her operations, manual and mental, let us say with Longfellow:

"Out of the shadow of night  
The world moves into light,  
It is daybreak everywhere!"

*The Messenger*, 5 (July, 1923): 763.

#### 4. THE NEGRO WOMAN IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

By Nora Newsome

The modern trade union movement is a product of the struggle between labor and capital. It had its rise in the industrial revolution which took place in the latter part of the 18th century. The industrial revolution introduced labor-saving machinery which was gradually concentrated into the hands of a few persons. This concentration of economic control over capital invested the owners with enormous power which they naturally employed in obedience to their self-interest, for the exploitation of the defenseless workers, who were now gathered in what is modernly known as a factory.

The growing refinement and specialization of machinery resulted in the partial displacement of the man worker, rendering it possible for the woman, and even the child, to compete in the factories with the men. Thus, it is clear, from a cursory survey of industrial history, that women, both black and

white, have been forced to violate the proverbial dogma that "woman's place is the home" and go into the sweat shops as the result of the iron law of economic necessity. This was no less true in America than in Europe.

In the United States the union movement is of later growth than in Europe. In that country, as early as 1348, soon after the Black Plague, workers held meetings for the purpose of fixing wages and hours. It is estimated that fifty per cent of the laborers perished in that epidemic and this diminution in the labor supply had the effect of doubling the wages paid to the survivors. This resulted in a statute being passed by Parliament prohibiting laborers from accepting higher wages than they had been receiving before the Plague. Another statute prescribed what the workers should eat and wear, and made it a penal offense for a laboring man to eat better food or wear better clothing than that provided for in the statute.

Of course, America was not discovered until 1492, and her industrial development was, of necessity, much later than that of the Old World.

Among early labor organizations in the United States were the Caulker's Club of Boston, organized for political purposes in the first quarter of the 18th century, and the union of bakers, which declared a strike in New York City in 1742.

Authors disagree as to the number of periods of trade union development. Richard T. Ely in his "Outlines of Economics" gives periods, and Frank T. Carlton in "Organized Labor in American History" gives seven, and still others vary as to the number and sequence. I have tried to inter-relate them as follows:<sup>36</sup>

(1) 1789-1825--Germinal period, which covers the history of the colonies, and of the first fifty years after the Declaration of Independence, and is our prefactory state of industrial development. Labor organizations are found only in the latter portion of this period, and these consist of only a few local and temporary trade societies.

(2) 1825-1837--Revolutionary Period. The introduction of the American factory system, which ushers in an epoch of extraordinary and premature organization of labor; close connection between trade unionism and more radical reforms, such as socialism and co-operation.

(3) 1838-1857--Period of Humanitarianism.

(4) 1859-1873--Civil War Period.

(5) 1876-1895--Federation Period. Characterized by the enlargement of business; unusual middle class agitation, the rise and decline of the Knights of Labor, the first successful general organization in the United States, and the birth of the American Federation of Labor in 1881.

(6) 1896-1923--Period of Collective Bargaining; so-called because of the rapid expansion of unionism, and the establishment of new national or district systems of collective bargaining after the industrial depression of 1893-1897; and because it is only in recent years that employers and the general public have recognized the fact that trade unionism is here to stay, and must be regarded as a permanent institution with which many employers of labor must bargain, whether they like it or not.

The trade union movement is bringing to the woman worker an immeasurable degree of economic independence, without which he is the natural and inevitable victim, the uplift Christian reformers to the contrary notwithstanding, of the necessity to barter her honor for gain. This is all the more obvious to modern psychological sociologists, who are beginning to see that the irresistible force of the "social me" drives the woman to fight, not only for the acquisition of necessities, but also for the satisfaction of her higher wants, or what is more euphemistically and reproachfully known as *vanity*.

The first American crusade against low wages for women was carried on by Matthew Carey, a Philadelphia publisher, from 1828 to the time of his death in 1839. In 1830, Carey estimated that there were between 18,000 and 20,000 "working women" in the four cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore. "At least 12,000 of these," he said, "could not earn by constant employment for 16 hours out of the 24, more than \$1.25 per week." Think of it! Matthew Carey also believed that there was a direct relationship between low wages and prostitution.<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to know that he offered a prize, valued at one hundred dollars, for the best essay "on the inadequacy of the wages generally paid to seamstresses, spoolers, spinners, shoe binders, etc., to procure food, raiment and lodging; on the effect of that inadequacy upon the happiness and morals of these females and their families, when they have any, and on the probability



that these low wages frequently force poor women to the choice between dishonor and absolute want of common necessities." Note that he said "common necessities" and not luxuries. This prize was won by a well-known social worker of that period, Rev. Joseph Tuckerman.

One of the most formidable trade unions of today is the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, which is composed of workers in the men's garment industry. It consolidated these workers, who had been most brutally exploited in the sweatshops, into one of the most aggressive and progressive organizations known in the labor movement. As an evidence of its foresight and policy of fair dealing, the Amalgamated has been the first union to put on a colored organizer, because it realizes that the most vital necessity exists for the organization of Negroes in industry into trade unions.

When I first reported to the business manager of the local for which I was to start organizing, he seemed a bit sceptical about my getting results. This local has an Italian organizer who had been sent to talk to the girls, both colored and white, in the open shops. The majority of the colored girls would not even listen to his arguments in favor of unionism, and the others would listen courteously but remain unorganized. I told this official that Negroes bitterly distrusted white people and had no faith in their promises, and that they could not reasonably expect to eradicate in one day, a week, or even a month, the impression that centuries of cruel treatment had created in the Negroes' minds. Of course, the A. C. W. A. has never discriminated against Negroes in its entire history, but they do not know that. To them it is simply a union, and they do not possess the necessary knowledge to discriminate between the good and bad unions.

I have been quite successful from the very beginning. The girls, almost without exception, have received me courteously and listened attentively to what I had to say. Several expressed themselves as being pleased that a colored woman organizer had been sent to talk to them, and voiced a dislike for men organizers. They felt, and rightly so, that a colored woman knew more than a white man possibly could about the specific ills from which their group suffered. Of course, there are certain generalizations that hold true and are applicable to both black and white alike, but the white has never been proscribed and denied the right of opportunity in industry as has the Negro.

Some of the girls were anxious to join the union and said they were glad I had been sent to them; that they knew union members received higher wages, and worked shorter hours under better conditions. One girl told me she wanted to join the union because the foreman in her shop would not let the colored girls do piece work. They are compelled to work for a flat salary of \$17.00 or \$18.00 a week, whereas, if they did piece work, in an open shop, they would make from \$25 to \$30. The union wage for the same work is at least \$40.00. The white pressers, mostly Italian men, in this shop, do piece work because they are organized and would not work there at all unless they did. The foreman, being non-union, is on the side of the employer, and if he can force the twelve colored pressers in his shop to work for \$18.00 a week when they could make \$30.00, he has saved \$144.00 a week for the boss. By the union standard he has saved at least \$264.00.

On the other hand, some of the workers fear that they might lose their jobs if it came to the ears of their employer that they had joined the union; others fear the loss of wages through strikes. I point out to them that if they lose their jobs because of joining the union, we find other jobs for them in union shops. When we organize a shop, our representative calls on the owner and informs him that he must institute union conditions and wages in his shop. If he agrees, very well; if he refuses, we call a strike, and if the strike lasts over a period of weeks, we pay benefits to the strikers, if we cannot find suitable jobs for them. After all, they usually see that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by coming into the union.

I find a disposition on the part of owners of open shops to employ more colored girls than white because the colored girls are usually unorganized and consequently work for lower wages. Then, too, some bosses pay the prevailing union wage in their fight to maintain the "open shop" in order to discourage workers from joining the union and fighting for increases.

Many of the girls possess a high degree of intelligence--indeed, many of them have a high school education for a job which requires no special education whatever. Of course, that is because the opportunity to learn the skilled branches of the trade as apprentices has been denied to them because of color,

and they must, perforce, become pressers or not work at all. The A. C. W. of A. has the record of only one colored girl who was employed as an operator. She was discharged by the boss on account of color, and immediately all the white operators went on strike and forced him to reinstate their colored comrade.

One afternoon, while I was waiting for the girls at closing time, a white girl was distributing circulars to employees of another shop in the building. The circulars were not sent out by our union, but I wanted to know, for general information, what they contained, so I asked for one. As I was reading it, a policeman came up and told me that I could not distribute circulars around there. I replied that I could not possibly be distributing them when I possessed only one, and that that one was for my personal satisfaction. I stayed where I was and talked to the girls as they came out of the building, but he did not trouble me again.

Some elevator operators, both white and colored, have co-operated with me splendidly in my organization work. They can render assistance in several ways, such as identifying the workers of a particular shop, the employer, the foreman, whether the girls go to lunch, and all that sort of thing.

One factor that retards the organization of colored workers is their migratory tendency. They are constantly changing from one job to another. With each successive change, they hope to find something better than they left behind; a mute expression, as it were, of the eternal desire of the human heart.

Organization into trade unions will usher in a new day for the Negro woman worker. Her economic problem arises from her ignorance of economic values, and from the exploitation to which this ignorance subjects her. The social pressure, which confines them to the most unskilled and low-grade occupations, most of which do not tend to uplift or develop them, is deadening, and the labor movement, as such, can never achieve the goal for which it is striving while its colored component is like the "Old Man of the Sea" on its back, because it is denied the opportunity to attain the heights aspired to by the other group.

Unionism, perhaps more than any other agency, will do much toward cementing the relationship between white and colored workers. When white and colored men and women meet on an equal basis in the workroom, fight together for their common betterment, and together bear the suffering resulting from that fight, I cannot possibly see how they can hate each other in the class room, restaurant, theatre or any other place where social intercourse is desirable.

The labor movement offers a glorious opportunity to young colored women of education and ideals to give creative, constructive service to the Negro race in particular, and the workers in general. Ever since my emancipation from the fetish of white collar supremacy and intellectual aloofness, I have yearned to become one of that steadily increasing number who, by means of voice and pen, are trying to hasten the dawn of a new day for the world's producers.

There is no data available on Negro women in the trade unions because they are not listed as such, and I have presented only the matter coming within my own experience as organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

*The Messenger*, 5 (July, 1923): 560-62.

##### 5. BOOTLEGGERS WELCOME ON THE NORTH SIDE

"Bootleggers welcome--'niggers' keep out!"

This is the stand taken by the small business men of Chicago's silk-stocking district, organized into the Loyola-Sheridan Business Association, in attempting to prevent the lease of the building at 6344-46 Broadway as a boarding school for colored girls.

##### It Was Former Cabaret

The building was formerly occupied by the Northern Lights cabaret, a notorious bootleg joint. This brought no protest from the Loyola-Sheridan

Business Association, in fact, members of the association had to call in their attorneys to discover that the place had been ordered closed by the courts, and that it had been re-opened in contempt of court.

But the information that a school for colored girls might open in the same building resulted in the calling of a special meeting of the Loyola business men.

And the Loyola business men, fearing the effect which the presence of self-respecting colored girls, trying to get an education, might have on real-estate values, will do everything in their power to prevent the signing of the lease.

#### Make "Jim Crow" City

The action of the Loyola association is in keeping with the campaign of small business men of Chicago with the aid of the police to prevent the Negroes from breaking thru the set boundaries of an established colored zone. A few days ago a colored man and a white woman, walking together, were approached by a policeman and forced to separate.

Every possible help in the plans to Jim-Crow the city is being given by the Chicago Tribune, which characterizes the news of the possible establishment of the school as a piece of "disconcerting intelligence."

*Daily Worker*, October 2, 1924.

#### 6. STRIKE OF NEGRO NURSES AT NEW ORLEANS BACKED BY DOCTORS, WHO FILE CHARGE AGAINST WHITE BOSS

NEW ORLEANS, La., May 14.--The Negro student nurses have struck at the Flint-Goodridge Hospital operated here by the Negro division of the methodist episcopal church, and the Negro doctors of the institution have filed charges against Dr. T. Restin Heath, white head of the hospital, it has been disclosed.

Altho the hospital officials are suppressing publicity, it is learned that the student nurses struck against the intolerable conditions imposed on them. They complained particularly of the poor food they are forced to eat.

The doctors filed the charges with the board of trustees of the church at Cincinnati, Ohio. Heath has been busy canvassing the local board of the trustees of the hospital here, composed of Negro ministers, and is endeavoring to line them up with him against the Negro doctors. He has had poor success so far.

One of the charges filed with the trustees by the doctors is that Heath called the doctors, "nigger doctors," in a staff meeting, and issued orders that they must not stop in the halls or be seen in front of the hospital. Another charge is that the superintendent refused to allow them to inspect the charts of patients who have been treated by white doctors without first obtaining permission of the white doctors.

The doctors declare they will resign unless conditions are bettered.

*Daily Worker*, May 15, 1925.

#### 7. WOMEN WORKERS

What can we tell about the economic status and prospect of Negro families by the number of men working? The recent analysis of the census figures on occupations by the Women's Bureau throws more light on the situation. These facts may be summarized:

Negro women represent about 10 per cent of all women, but 18.4 per cent of those at work.

Over twice as many of them work as native whites and foreign whites, and

just about 60 per cent more of them work than native white women of foreign or mixed parentage.

The number employed in agriculture dropped between 1910 and 1920 from 1,051,137 to 612,261 and increased in industry from 67,937 to 104,983. Here the movement from the farm is strikingly evident and the opening of the industries of the North is definitely indicated. Yet in the shift, 333,093 are lost.

There are 62,756 more domestics than there were in 1910.

There are six times as many Negro girls under 16 working as native white girls and four times as many Negro women over 65 at work as white. Thus, at both extremes they must be wage-earners.

Of the married Negro working women 15 years of age and over, 44.9 per cent must work as compared with 19.4 per cent for native white women of native parents, and 11.7 for native white women of foreign parentage.

Marriage, it seems does not offer any significant change in the status of Negro women.

Both the problems of birth-rate and death-rate are bound up in this economic necessity. Working mothers can neither give the maximum vitality to the children to whom they give birth nor a reasonable measure of care to their health and education after they are born. There may, after all, be a closer relation than we suspect between the declining Negro death-rate in the more advanced communities and the decreasing proportions of married women who must work between the problems of Negro health, broadly, and the opportunity of the father to earn a decent livelihood.

*Opportunity*, 3 (August, 1925): 226.

#### 8. START CAMPAIGN TO HELP NEGRO WOMEN'S STRIKE

##### Strikers Get Credentials From C.F. of L.

A campaign to raise strike funds for the Negro women, employed as date stuffers at the Maras company factory, who have been on strike since last Saturday, is under way in Chicago.

Credentials to solicit funds from local unions will be given the strikers Monday by the Federation of Labor, it is announced. The Federation also will urge support of the strike in its Saturday and Sunday radio program.

A campaign to raise strike funds for the women, who on account of the low wages they were paid while working, and the fact that they have been on strike for a week, are almost destitute, is being conducted by the I.W.A.

##### Committees For Funds

Some 15 committees have been formed to solicit funds from the various Negro organizations and churches in the city who are sympathetic with the strikers. Ranks of the strikers have grown daily. Organization is the goal of the women.

Two of the strikers who were arrested for picketing were released from jail after bond was furnished by the International Labor Defense. The women demanded a jury trial on the charge of disorderly conduct. The date of the trial has not yet been set.

*Daily Worker*, October 9, 1926.

#### 9. TWO MORE WOMEN JAILED BY COPS IN DATE STRIKE

##### 25 Other Workers Join the Ranks

Two more women were arrested by police here Tuesday morning in an effort to break the strike of the Negro women, employed as date stuffers at the Maras

and Company date factory, 214 West Kinzie street.

Tuesday's arrests were made without the slightest provocation on the part of the workers, who were peacefully picketing the factory premises.

The women, Mrs. Robert Jones, 509 East Thirty-fifth street, and Mrs. Ella Smith, 17 S. State street, were taken to the Chicago avenue police station, and held there charged with disorderly conduct until intervention was made by the International Labor Defense. They were handled roughly by the officers, and it is possible that charges will be filed against the police.

#### Strike Spreading

The strike, which has been in progress since Oct. 2, is growing stronger every day. Twenty-five more women workers joined the ranks of the strikers Tuesday morning, swelling the total to more than 125.

The strike was called when the Maras company posted a notice of a wage reduction.

A temporary union organization has been formed by the women, and headquarters established at 30 North Wells street.

*Daily Worker*, October 6, 1926.

#### 10. SOMETHING NEW--NEGRO WOMEN STRIKERS

The strike of some 150 or 200 Negro women, employed by a Chicago confectionary concern in protest against a wage cut is one of the encouraging signs of movement among unorganized workers in low-paid and unskilled occupations.

The number of workers involved in this struggle is insignificant, but the strike is important first, because it is a strike of Negroes and second, because it is a strike of Negro women workers--the most exploited and harassed section of the Negro masses.

Able to make a maximum of \$14 per week only by the most intensive and sustained labor at piece work, an attempt to reduce this miserable wage still further resulted in the strike. Unorganized, these women secured aid from the American Negro Labor Congress, set up a temporary organization and have now the support of the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Women's Trade Union League.<sup>38</sup>

The manner in which the labor movement has responded to the appeal of these workers makes one of the few bright spots in recent labor history here.

There are rumors that similar revolts of underpaid Negro women workers may be expected in other lines of industry and there is no reason why, with these workers proving their desire for organization and their will to struggle, the Chicago trade unions should not be able to undertake a successful organizing campaign which would bring thousands of Negro men and women into the ranks of organized labor.

The Chicago Federation of Labor unanimously pledged its support at its Sunday meeting and this support must not be allowed to dissipate itself in the passing of resolutions, but be expressed in concrete organizational steps.

In the meantime financial aid for the present strike is needed and it should be given generously. If it is it will pay huge dividends to the trade union movement in Chicago and result in immense progress towards breaking down the racial bars which still divide the working class in and out of the unions.

*Daily Worker*, October 19, 1926.

#### 11. POLICE JAIL TWO NEGRO WOMEN IN CHICAGO STRIKE

Passaic police tactics were used in Chicago Monday morning when a squad of coppers was used to disperse a crowd of Negro women strikers who were picketing the premises of the Maras & Company date factory, 214 West Kinzie street.

Summoned by the officials of the factory, who Friday had given notice of a wage reduction, the third within a year, the police rushed the strikers. Two of the women were taken to jail. They were Elizabeth Griffin, 3638 Ellis Park, and Mrs. Laura Smith, 17 South State Street.

Held in jail two hours, they were released only after intercession by the American Negro Labor Congress.

Every one of the hundred workers who walked out in a body Saturday appeared at the factory Monday morning for picket duty despite the heavy rain that fell all morning.

#### Earned \$14 A Week

The workers had been receiving six and one-half cents per pound stuffing dates. At this rate, an extra speedy worker might be able to make \$2.60 a day by working nine hours without a let-up.

The average amount earned by the workers was \$14 a week. But the Maras company desired to cut their earnings even still more and issued Friday's notice. Other workers at the factory have even lower scales.

#### Hold Meeting

From the factory premises the workers went to 30 North Wells St. where a strikers' demonstration meeting was held. The trade union committee of the American Negro Labor Congress offered its assistance and helped organize a relief committee that will work with the I.W.A.

A delegation was sent to headquarters of the Chicago Federation of Labor to ask for unionization. No action had been taken by the federation up to Monday night. A temporary union organization, however, has been begun. Headquarters are at 30 North Wells street.

*Daily Worker*, October 8, 1926.

### 12. THE NEGRO WORKING WOMAN

The Negro woman is a worker. There are very few leisure class women among us. Under slavery our women toiled in the field, and labored in the house.

Today large numbers still slave on farms in the South and in the domestic service all over the country. But thousands have gone into factories, mills and shops in the big cities. We have also developed a considerable professional class of teachers, doctors, nurses and lawyers. . . .

Small pay, filthy work, and long hours are the lot of the colored woman in industry. All the evils of the South, lynching, discrimination, poor schools, Jim Crow laws, peonage and the chain gang which bear so heavily on Negro men are doubly hard for Negro women. . . .

Of all the working class, the Negro woman is least organized. But she at last realizes her power of organized labor. She recognizes her own power as a worker.

Now only a few factory workers belong to progressive unions in the large cities. The number will grow as the colored woman herself goes out to organize her sisters.

Have we any examples of revolutionary leadership? Yes, Harriet Tubman, fugitive slave, made nineteen trips back into slave territory, and brought out over three hundred slaves.

Sojourner Truth, freed, when slavery was abolished in New York, gave her time, and used her simple eloquence in the abolitionist cause.

Their examples will inspire us.<sup>39</sup>

*Daily Worker*, March 8, 1927.

13. MUST ORGANIZE NEGRO WOMEN TO STOP SCABBING

Thousands in Many Trades Want Union  
*By a Woman Worker Correspondent*

Negro women in the past have been almost entirely confined to domestic work. It is comparatively in very recent years that the Negro woman has come into industry. The trades in which she is now chiefly confined are those that have branched off from the home, the needle trades, hotels and restaurants, laundries, and as car and office cleaners, etc. There are few in the basic industries, except in some of the southern textile mills.

Lamp Shade Slaves

In Chicago Negro women work in many of the novelty industries; for instance, in the silk lamp shade trade. Thousands and thousands in Chicago learned this "fly by night" work. Not only did they toil in the factories every day, but they were allowed to carry lamp shades home at night. Children in the homes wrapped the frames for their mothers and older sisters to cover with the silk cloth. The whole family learned the trade, and as soon as each girl was old enough, she followed her mother or sister into the factory.

Flower Trade

I mention this case because it is one of the most outstanding, but it is similar to many trades in which Negro women are found; such trades as the making of artificial flowers, party favors, children's toys, decorative stationery, valentines and ten-cent store trinkets.

In the past, Negro men, in order to force their way into industry, were often compelled to scab and Negro women should not be reduced to such a choice. When given an opportunity to act as a group and to demonstrate their solidarity against the employers, they have done so.

In New York, the unorganized Negro laundresses walked out 100 per cent in sympathy with the striking drivers. In Chicago, Negro date workers put up a militant fight for better conditions without guidance from the trade unions.

If the organized labor movement would turn its attention to the Negro working women, there is no question but that it would find eager and valuable allies.

ROMANIA FERGUSON

*Daily Worker*, March 21, 1928.

14. WOMEN DAY WORKERS LEAGUE

*By Fanny Austin*

Negro women employed in domestic service and as office and shop cleaners have organized a union known as the Harlem Women Day Workers League under the leadership of Fanny Austin, well-known labor organizer.

The organization has a membership of nearly a hundred workers, who meet regularly and discuss ways and means of improving their economic conditions, especially with respect to the unsanitary and exorbitant housing problem in Harlem.

Sister Austin and her associates are drawing a large number of workers into the organization which has adopted a militant program of action.

Workers in domestic service are among the most exploited sections of the working class, due largely to their lack of organization. The Harlem Women Day Workers League is supplying a long felt need and should be supported by every class-conscious worker engaged in this line of service.

The League has an office at 200 West 135th Street, Room 211, New York City, where full information can be obtained.

*Negro Champion*, August 28, 1928.

#### 15. EVA, THE BLACK WORKING GIRL

Eva is a black girl. She had the misfortune to be born of black-skinned parents, and for such a crime, for which neither she nor her race is responsible, she is punished with scorn and insults.

When Eva came to work in my shop as a presser, all the white snobs threw angry looks at her and protested. They asked with an injured air and with indignation: "What is this?" How does a Negress come here? And where does she get the nerve to come among whites? But Eva had enough tact and pretended not to notice anything. She ignored them.

At lunch time when she finished her meal, she read the *Daily Worker* or one of the books that deal with the problems of the class struggle. Eva belongs to the Workers (Communist Party and does very efficient work among her despised brothers and sisters. She possesses a native intelligence which is not found among most of the hundred per cent Americans. It would be fine if all the white-skinned swells would take lessons of the black girl Eva, then we would have hope for a quick victory of our struggle for freedom.

*Negro Champion*, August 28, 1928.

#### 16. PAY FOR NEGRO LAUNDRY SLAVES

Girls, Women Driven Mercilessly

By Mary Adams

Reprinted from the *Negro Champion*

To my question, "How are the conditions in your laundry?" I received a flood of protests and complaints from the Negro girls and women working in this particular laundry.

Conditions are terrible and well nigh intolerable, they all agreed. The pay is miserable. They get on an average about \$12 a week. In addition, they are never sure of what's in their pay envelopes. They are constantly docked and never told for what reason. In fact, they simply get what the boss feels like handing out each particular pay day.

#### Slave 12-Hour Day

"Our hours are not fixed. We understand we should go home at six. We start work at seven in the morning, but often have to stay until seven at night, and several times we were worked until eleven. We had no extra pay for this overtime.

"I have never been able to get a definite agreement about wages," added a dignified woman, the best worker in the place, I was told.

"When I came I told the boss I had been getting \$18 a week. He said, 'All right come on. I will do the right thing by you.' But at no time have I received more than \$15. He always puts me off with promises when I approach him on the subject."

Miserable wages, long hours, overtime without pay, uncertainty of pay and many other evils are the rule in the laundries.



## Need Leadership

These conditions must be changed. These girls and women show a desire to do something definite. They lack leadership. The Workers (Communist) Party and the American Negro Labor Congress must supply this leadership. The Congress has helped to organize and give leadership to Negro workers in other industries. We must supply leadership and inspiration to the thousands of Negro workers who are being exploited under the most damnable and inhuman conditions in the laundries of this city.

*Daily Worker*, March 8, 1929.

## 17. NEGRO WOMAN CIGAR SLAVES IN WALKOUT

## Demand to Be Taken Into Union

*(By a Worker Correspondent)*

PHILADELPHIA.--Over 100 unorganized Negro women workers at the world's largest cigar factory, Bayuk Brothers, corner Ninth St. and Columbia Ave., walked out a few weeks ago in protest against the miserable slave conditions they had to work under. Given a rate of 25 cents for stripping 12 and a half pounds of tobacco, the pay envelopes of the group for a full week ranged from \$3.50 to \$11 a week, the average the women made being around \$9.

The girls demanded an increase of 10 cents in the rate and walked out in a body when the bosses refused to grant the demand. The girls are forced to work 10 hours a day or more, and the conditions they work under are unsanitary. In a few years the girls and women working in the Bayuk factory come out with their health nearly completely destroyed. They were entirely unorganized at the time the strike started.

The Cigarmakers' Union officials did not try to organize these workers, but the girls were so anxious to join a union, that they walked in a body down to the office of the union asking to be taken in the union. They were tired of the long years of slavery they had to stand when they were not organized, and naturally tho the union officials did not seem to care about them, they were desperate and went to the officials of the union to be organized.

IDA, A Negro Cigar Slave.

*Daily Worker*, February 18, 1929.

## 18. WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

## Negro Women in Industry

The United States Women's Bureau has recently brought together the findings of its various studies of negro women in industry and published them as Bulletin No. 70. The most comprehensive of these studies was a survey made in 1920-21, covering 11,812 women in 150 manufacturing plants in 9 States. In addition to this, the bureau has made industrial surveys of 15 States in which negro women were included, the dates of these studies ranging from 1918 to 1925, and the size of the negro group covered from 18 in Iowa to 5,032 in Virginia. These 15 studies which are here brought together dealt with 17,134 colored women employed in 682 establishments. Of these, 4,850 employed in 370 plants have been omitted, since "the interest of this bulletin centers in the negro woman in the newer manufacturing pursuits and those excluded were known to be engaged in occupations considered customary for negro women, such as sweeping and cleaning, or were in laundries, hotels, or restaurants." It

will be noticed that the data were gathered at different times through a period of seven years, the comprehensiveness of the separate studies varies, and it is possible that changes in industrial progress since 1918 have altered some of the conditions. Nevertheless, the findings have been brought together in the belief that they present a fairly accurate cross section of the prevailing status of negro women in manufacturing industries during the first half of the present decade.

Industrial employment is a comparatively new thing for negro women, and showed a marked increase at the very time that the extent of their employment in gainful occupations showed a decrease. In 1910, according to the census of that year, 54.7 per cent of all negro women were gainfully employed, but in 1920 only 38.9 per cent were so employed, the number employed in industrial occupations, however, increased during the period by 37,046, and the proportionate increase was even greater.

The proportion of the employed negro women who were in the manufacturing and mechanical industries nearly doubled, rising from 3.4 per cent of the total in 1910 to 6.7 per cent of the total in 1920, when 104,983 are listed in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits. This is in vivid contrast to the increase of only one-tenth of 1 per cent in all women so engaged, and shows a very striking change in the status of negro women during the decade.

#### Occupational Distribution

It is a Truism that newcomers usually make their entrance into industry through the least desirable trades or processes. This is especially true of negro women, who in securing their footing had to overcome a discrimination based on sex as well as race. By far the largest group, 6,411, or 52.2 per cent, were working in tobacco and tobacco products, more than one-half being in the occupation known as "stemming" or "stripping." Food products including in this term bakers, the canning and preserving of fruits and vegetables, slaughtering and meat packing, and nuts, employed 2,302 or 19.5 per cent. The largest single group here was working on nuts, four-fifths of whom were engaged in picking out kernels, and none followed unusual occupations, except that in one case a negro woman was forewoman in a room of 19 workers. Few of the food workers were in occupations requiring skill, and some were engaged in exceedingly disagreeable work.

The 800 in slaughtering and meat packing were engaged in the dirtiest, roughest, or most disagreeable operations in which any women were employed in this industry, where practically all the processes except the final packing may be considered dirty, rough or disagreeable. One-third of those reported worked with casings and chitterlings. In one plant a few were engaged on the killing floor. More than 100 were occupied with hand-knife processes that require dexterity, skill, and sometimes a good deal of strength.

Textiles employed a total of 1,176 or 9.6 per cent of the entire group. The majority of these were in plants making cotton yard goods or hosiery and knit goods, but smaller groups were found in bag-making factories, in the manufacture of cordage and twine, in yarn plants, in waste factories and in other miscellaneous textile establishments. In most of these cases, the colored women were engaged in general labor or were helping the machine operators. "The work requiring most skill was that in hosiery, where of the 327 included more than two-fifths were looping and seaming, a few were spinning, and 70 were boarding."

Wood products employed 980, or 8 per cent of the total, mostly at such occupations as stacking wood, off-bearing, sandpapering, gluing, or varnishing. A few were assembling parts and a number were assisting at saws.

No other occupational group accounted for as much as 5 per cent of the total. Two and eight-tenths per cent were in house furnishings, 2.4 per cent in glass products, 1 per cent in clothing, 0.8 per cent in paper and paper products, 0.6 per cent in metal products, 1.9 per cent in miscellaneous manufacturing, and 1.3 per cent in general mercantile occupations. To a large extent they were employed in the less skilled kinds of work, but some exceptions were found.

One of the most significant cases in the whole range of the establishments studied was that of a printing and publishing company, where there were 17 negro women. They were in high-grade occupations at which comparatively few women work. The firm was that of a negro religious paper in a southern State, and 7 women were in the bindery, 3 were in the composing room, 3 were monotype operators, 1 was a press operator, and 3 read proof.

Wages and hours are given in considerable detail, but naturally these varied so widely according to locality and industry it would be difficult to summarize them. The same is true of earnings. A study of the time the women had spent in the trades in which they were found showed that of 2,819 who reported, slightly over three-fifths (61.7 per cent) had been at their work for at least two years, while over one-sixth (17.6 per cent) had been in the same trade for 5 and under 10 years, and 11.4 per cent for 10 years and over. They were not a conspicuously youthful group, 13.1 per cent of the 3,150 reporting on age being under 20, 42.7 per cent 20 and under 30, 25.7 per cent 30 and under 40, 12.7 per cent 40 and under 50, and 5.8 per cent over 50. Of 3,048 reporting on marital status, 39.9 per cent were married, 29.8 per cent widowed, separated, or divorced, and 30.2 per cent single.

As a result of the studies it is felt that the situation justifies a somewhat optimistic view. The work negro women were doing when these studies were made was an advance over earlier conditions.

The types of work in which negro women were found may safely be said to represent, for them, distinct if somewhat slow industrial progress. Large numbers were still engaged in sweeping and in cleaning of various kinds and many of these have been omitted from the present study. Others worked at tasks that would properly be classified under general labor. Still others were in employments that, while scarcely unusual in themselves, were notable because they represented the carrying over of the older traditional occupations, sometimes with changes in method, into the newer industrial system. A considerable number operated machines of different kinds, many of which involved only simple operations or movements repeated indefinitely, but some of which required dexterity or a degree of skill. A few were found in supervisory posts or in positions involving more or less responsibility. . . . Occupations that required the greatest skill were those of the spinners in textile plants and of the loopers and seamers in hosiery mills, of the operators of power sewing machines and of metal presses of the riveters in bag factories, of the core makers in metal plants of a few of those working in wooden-box making, and of those found in one printing and publishing house in which negro women are carrying on all parts of the work, however skilled, including monotype operating, composing, and proof reading.

Monthly Labor Review, 29 (September, 1929): 54-56.

#### 19. NO RACE PREJUDICE IN NEEDLE TRADES UNION

By Henry Rosemond  
(Vice-President of the Needle Trades Workers'  
Industrial Union)

Under the leadership of the Left wingers, race prejudice has been completely abolished in the Needle Trades Industrial Union, which includes in its membership large numbers of colored people of various nationalities. This new union wages a militant struggle against race discrimination, and although it was founded only a short while ago, the effects of its policies are already being felt among the colored workers in the shops. This is not the policy of the yellow International Ladies' Garment Workers, that are under the control of the A.F. of L. In these unions race prejudice and race discrimination are encouraged because they serve the bosses to keep the workers in constant struggle against each other and thus help the bosses to keep the workers in slavery.

The new needle trades union was formed with some Negro workers playing an active part in the convention as well as in filling some of the highest posi-

tions in the union. Wednesday, February 6, the first strike of this new Union, a great number of Negroes have been militantly active in it. Over 40 of them have joined the Strike and Picket Committees; one of them is a member of the Strike Finance Committee, and another is a member of the Joint Board.

During the strike I have been around and have spoken to many of the strikers: Marie Franklin, Edith Brown, Edna Kemp, Mattie Brian, Louise Martin, Eva Mayo, Laura Smith, and many others. They all said that they were treated royal by the leaders and the white strikers in the halls and elsewhere. The four last ones mentioned were back to work, they being strikers from shops that have signed the agreement concluded by the new union. These colored girls stated that they will do their very best to support the union and also see that their parents and friends who are in the trade join this union--the Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union of the U.S.A.--the only one in the trade that really fights for the interests of the workers, not only white, but colored as well.

*Daily Worker*, March 1, 1929.

## 20. JIM CROW UNION

### Food Strikers Call for Aid of Negro Women

"Negro women! Don't be deceived by labor fakers! Join a real fighting organization!" were the slogans heading a leaflet distributed by members of the striking Hotel, Restaurant and Cafeteria Workers' Union to Negro women workers. . . .

Attempting to capitalize on the growing spirit of revolt against the intolerable conditions, William Lehman, vice-president of the A.F. of L. Waiters' Local No. 1, which discriminated against Negroes and which is now helping the cafeteria bosses against the restaurant strikers, and Victor C. Gasper, an agent of the labor fakers, who tried to wreck the Women's Day Workers League and the House Painters called the meeting.

At the meeting last night the fakers, under the pretense of organizing the fake "Progressive Women's Union," in reality tried to use the Negro workers who they discriminate against, to betray the workers and try to break the cafeteria workers' strike.

The leaflet of the militant cafeteria workers' union pointed out the treachery of these officials, who, while organizing a very small portion of the waiters--the aristocrats of food workers--and left the masses of other food workers to be badly exploited. Lehman has done nothing to better the conditions of the Negro, Chinese and Spanish workers who slave 12 to 14 hours a day in hot kitchens for such low wages as \$12 a week and has refused membership in the union. Now he wants to organize a Jim-Crow union with a separate charter.

The leaflet calls upon the Negro women workers to support the cafeteria strike and join the union, the Hotel, Restaurant and Cafeteria Workers Union, in which there is no discriminations.

*Daily Worker*, May 16, 1929.

## 21. THE COLORED DRESSMAKERS

Announcement that the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union is making a drive to organize the colored women employed in the dress industry of New York City is welcome news. Now that the organization has reestablished itself after some years of internal strife which had left it prostrate, the organization of the colored women in the industry is the next big job.

The spread between the wages paid these women workers in the unorganized

shops (\$8 and \$12 per week) and the union wage (\$26 to \$44 per week) is an example of the revolting conditions that are possible for the sweated workers. Their starvation wage is a menace to labor standards throughout the industry and we hope that this organization job will bring a big majority of the colored women workers within the protective fold of the union.

*New Leader*, September 28, 1929.

## 22. A STARVING NEGRO WOMAN WORKER WHO IS READY TO FIGHT

Same Slavery in Cleveland As She Had in Hell-  
Hole Town in Mississippi

Tells Jobless Women Workers Not to Starve But  
Join Unemployed Councils and Fight

*(By a Worker Correspondent)*

CLEVELAND, Ohio.--In this little town by the name of Louisville, Miss., they don't want a Negro from the North to live. What kind of a world is this for the working people? The club and pistol were made for the working class. If we all were capitalists it would not be "club and pistol." What they do is to give us poor colored people, some of us, \$3.50 worth of groceries for all of us in the family to last a week. It's just enough to keep us alive, and we are in rags. The community fund says you don't have to go in rags, we will give you some and then what do they do? They give us a card to go and get some clothes and then they want us to pay for them, such clothes, all patched up and stinky.

The community fund don't know what they should do, well, I'll tell them; they better get us some food so we don't have to starve, and do that to every hungry worker, and clothes, too.

They get millions of dollars every year out of us--people's wages--and then, when they should give it back, they say they do not have any. If they have those millions of dollars every year they get from us, then they must have it and must give it to us and besides the unemployment situation must be changed; we want relief from this hunger, we want clothes, why don't the government take care of us while there isn't any work, so that we don't have to freeze and starve and walk all the time because we do not even have money for street car fare?

Every working woman should join the Unemployed Council if she is not working. I certainly will be ready to fight because I am hungry and so are my children.<sup>40</sup>

NEGRO WOMAN WORKER.

*Daily Worker*, June 16, 1930.

## 23. SLAVERY IN ATLANTA LAUNDRY

*(By a Worker Correspondent)*

Atlanta, Ga.

Colored girls and married women slave here in the laundry of a boss who called himself "revolutionary," from early in the morning till late at night. When finished with the work they can hardly walk home from exhaustion.

They get 30 minutes for lunch. The girls are always on time, and dare not take a chance on being late for they are sure of losing their job.

When the girls thought the boss was out one day, they took a couple of minutes to say a few words to each other to change the monotony, but the boss was in, he jumped out of his office like a crazy man. The next day five of the

girls remained home, canned for having allowed themselves the luxury of talking.

As to the wages, you can call it that, if you want. It's just a pitiful existence. One girl who worked in the place for over two and a half years will make \$6.50 a week if she works from 7:15 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. But this happens very seldom because the boss does not always give her enough work, and besides he doesn't want her to make "so much."

Long hours and constant fear of losing their jobs--these are the conditions of the many Negro girls in a shop whose slave owner was at one time a member of the working class, and even a so-called fighter for the workers' cause. The workers in this shop must organize and demand decent wages and conditions.

J.C.

*Southern Worker*, October 25, 1930.

#### 24. NEGRO WOMEN SLAVE FOR \$4 WEEKLY IN CHARLESTON

Charleston, S.C.

At the bagging mill in Charleston over 600 Negro young girls and old women slave under the most miserable conditions, from early sunrise to sunset, 10 to 12 hours a day for \$4 a week.

The highest that anyone ever made in this mill, and there are women here who have worked for 6 and 10 years, is \$7. But in order to make this "very high wage," one must be very fast.

For being 5 minutes late to work the boss man takes off 25 cents from the week's wages. If a fight should take place between two girls during the lunch hour, each girl must pay \$2 to the boss out of her weekly \$4 wage.

Working under the most unsanitary conditions and long hours, and with miserable conditions at home (for what kind of a home can a worker have on \$4 a week?) these women and girls are disgusted and are ready for organization.

One girl said that if someone from the union would come and speak to them that she was sure all of them would join and fight for decent conditions and more pay. "For there is nothing we have that we can lose," she said. "The pay we got, after the rent is taken out of it, we have enough money left for some little rice to buy, and then there is not enough. We keep hoping that some day the bosses will have pity on us and give us a little more money, but it seems like he is not interested in us, and don't care if we starve, so I reckon we better join up in the Union and fight for our right to live."

Is there any wonder there is so much Pellagra and other diseases among the workers? We are beginning to organize there.

J.C.

*Southern Worker*, September 13, 1930.

#### 25. 50-YEAR-OLD NEGRO WOMAN SET FOR FIGHT

By a Worker Correspondent

Charlotte, N.C.

I am a Negro working woman who has done all kinds of work, even pick sweeps in a cotton mill where we had to pick all the white cotton out of the lint and spit. But when times got so hard the boss told me I would have to hunt me a job.

I walked from house to house, begging for something to do and could not even find washing or scrubbing.

When I heard of the Trade Union Unity League I went to two meetings and

heard the speakers and saw what they were trying to do, I joined up.

I am 50 years old and hope to live to see my people free and the poor white people also.

--A Negro Working Woman.

*Southern Worker*, February 14, 1931.

## 26. UNORGANIZED DOMESTIC TOILERS ARE PREY TO RICH SNEAKS

Negro Woman Worker Tells of Mistreatment in  
Homes of Wealthy People

By a Worker Correspondent

NEW YORK--In the struggle to win the Negro people to the revolutionary program in New York City, the task of building a strong functioning Domestic Workers Union, is of fundamental importance.

Recently a case of deliberate and malicious mistreatment of a domestic worker, by employers who were sure there could be no comeback, came to my attention.

A young Negro girl, a college graduate forced into domestic service by economic conditions, was refused the miserly monthly payment, \$20, agreed upon, on the assertion of the employers that the agreement had been made for \$20 a season that is, for three months, instead of for one month.

This was "explained" after the girl, having worked two months and having obtained \$10 of her money and being tired of continually asking for money due her had decided to pack up and leave for good.

The last time the girl asked for money, the woman had said she intended to pay her "everything at the end of the season." Not at any time was the "agreement" about \$20 for 90 days work mentioned, or even hinted at.

When the girl's family protested, the employer angrily insisted that she had made the agreement not with the family, but with the girl, and the school agency. The job was obtained through the Brooklyn College Employment Agency.

That the whole thing was a deliberate trick cannot be doubted. This, however, is only one incident. We Negroes and those who have worked among the Negro people know of other cases.

There have been times when the "madam" framed up cases of robbery. She lost some valuables just about pay time. Other times her husband's business goes bankrupt, or she intends to pay, but by the time the maid has spent a few dollars in carfare trying to collect, she gives up all hope of ever getting paid.

We are going to fight this case presented here. We are going to protest to the College Agency. But we ought to make an example of this. It is the duty of the militant class-conscious worker to enter into the struggle of the Negro domestic worker, to fight not only for improved conditions, but for a cessation of this outright robbery.

If actions like this are allowed to go unchecked, they will do much to retard the march of the Negro woman worker toward joint struggle with her white sister in fighting against discrimination of all woman workers.

I call upon all domestic workers to get in touch with the Domestic Workers' Union, 415 Lenox Ave., New York City, to organize.

I call upon all revolutionary workers to bear in mind these special problems of the Negro worker. It is not vague assaults on general problems, but concrete action that will win these workers to our program.

A NEGRO WOMAN WORKER.

*Daily Worker*, September 3, 1934.

## 27. THE GARMENT UNION COMES TO THE NEGRO WORKER

By Edith Kine

If one were to hazard the suggestion, a year ago, that in April 1934, thousands of Negro women--and men--would form solid blocks of organized workers within an established A.F. of L. needle trades' union, he would have been dismissed as little short of visionary. Such a sceptical--or realistic--attitude would have been perfectly justified nevertheless. Until last year Negro workers, in an organizational sense, had been distinctly on the outer side of the periphery in the great women's garment industry. Not that there were no Negroes in the dressmakers' or white goods workers' union until the Summer of 1933. A sprinkling of them, of a wideawake, altruistic strain, had percolated into these organizations several years ago and their presence in these unions of white girls and men was not only tolerated--it was pointed at occasionally with a pride which had the unmistakable veneer of showmanship.

En masse, however, the Negroes in the garment trades were considered as poor organizable material. This prejudice--not unlike a superstition--had not been weakened in 1930 and in 1932, when fervent appeals by the leadership of the Dressmakers' Union of New York, an affiliate of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, to join in general strikes failed to make an impression on the Negro workers in the dress shops. In Chicago, Philadelphia and elsewhere where Negro workers are employed in dress shops, the experience was similar.

Yet, the selfsame Negro women and men came down from their shops literally in the thousands in August, 1933, joined the union, and have since become integrated as inseparable parts of the organized shop units.

This metamorphosis has come about so quickly that it is difficult to ascribe it to any one factor. The fact, nevertheless, remains that today, for the first time since Negroes have entered industry, they are, at least in one major industry, on a footing of equality with their white fellow workers. Color is no longer a factor, in the needle trades shop, in determining wages or hours of work. The Negro workers, not singly but as an entire group, are no longer viewed with distrust or dislike as possible strikebreakers or as cheap labor.

Is it fair to state that it was the NRA that was responsible for this literal upheaval in the status of the Negro worker in the women's apparel shops? Has the Recovery Act played eccentric Santa Claus to the West Harlem of New York or the South Side of Chicago, leaving in thousands of workers' homes not a vagrant windfall but permanent security of wage equality and employment opportunity?

On the face of outward facts no other answer seems possible. Yet, the perspective of this change would be woefully inadequate were we to rest it solely on the impetus furnished by the NRA. The truth is that in the Summer of 1933, by the time the first industrial codes were beginning to shape up on the horizon, employment conditions had hit bottom in all industry--and in the garment trades in particular--affecting with frightful severity not only the Negro workers but the white workers as well. It was not merely the Negro workers in the garment shops who were being exploited to a breaking point--tens of thousands of white dress workers--Jews, Italians, Hungarians, Poles and natives--had been reduced to a sweatshop level in nearly every market the country over. And it was not the Negro workers alone who had stayed away from the union at that time. In New York City, out of the estimated 90,000 dress shop workers, not more than 20,000 were on the roll of the union, while the preponderant majority kept either aloof or was pronouncedly anti-union.

Another sidelight should not be ignored in considering the NRA potentialities for the Negro workers, especially during the early stages. There appeared, at that time, in many an industry, the distinct menace that the employers, forbidden by code terms to exploit Negroes as they had in the past, would not hesitate to dismiss colored workers and replace them by white workers. This obvious danger, by the way, has not entirely disappeared in many trades, but insofar as the garment industry is concerned, it was obviated by the swift turn of events let loose upon the initiative of workers' organization.

As the codes were being bargained over and shaped in Washington, an avalanche of organizing campaigns and strikes, under the direction of the I.L.G. W.U., began to inundate the women's garment shops. The dress strike in New



York, a touchstone of this union movement in 1933, brought down nearly 60,000 formerly non-union workers from the shops into the union halls, and along with this great mass came thousands of Negro workers, excited, enthusiastic, with song on their lips and an augury of a miraculous change in their hearts. This spontaneous response of the Negro workers to the strike call has since proved a great boon to themselves inasmuch as their wages have been doubled, their work week astoundingly shortened and, most important of all, they have for the first time come to enjoy the feeling of genuine economic equality with white women workers. No better proof of this allegation may be furnished than by the fact that since August, 1933, quite a number of Negro girls have been selected in several shops--with mixed colored and white working staffs--as shop "chairladies," heretofore an unheard of honor to the workers of the Negro race.

A little more of the background of Negro labor history may be in place to light up the current race facet of worker relations in the garment shops and to offer a cue to their possible unfolding.

Until the days of the World War, Negro women, in the less industrialized sections, were employed almost wholly in farm work, while in the cities they were mainly in demand for domestic or personal service, and in each case they were flagrantly underpaid. On the whole, Negro women were considered incapable of factory and other so-called skilled labor. In many parts of the country the whites resented the competition of cheap Negro labor, and refused to work with them. But during the War, because of the universal shortage of labor, Negro women were permitted and even urged to enter the manufacturing pursuits in large numbers, although mainly in unskilled jobs. But even in those golden days they were concentrated in unorganizable occupations, and were victims of economic exploitation and discrimination which resulted in unequal pay despite a satisfactory standard of efficiency.

In the natural course of events, Negro women began trickling into the dress and allied shop industries, but even in these trades they were regarded with suspicion and distrust by the white workers, in those years largely Jewish women, who looked upon the Negro girls as prospective strikebreakers and as an element that would eventually degrade working conditions. The fact is that in 1927, during an exciting strike of dress workers which lasted 26 weeks, they were brought into the shops of Chicago as strikebreakers. With that, they were stigmatized, and later they were largely employed as all-around help, cleaners, examiners, etc. The I.L.G.W.U. had made every effort to include them in the union but with little success.

Two or three years afterward, Negro women began to be employed as ironers, and later as finishers, but they were never employed as operators, and but a handful of them work at the machines even today. The Negro garment worker, however, made the best of the little she had gained, and became very adept as finisher, trimmer, examiner and ironer. Employers did not hesitate to hire them in larger numbers during periods of labor troubles, for they worked for lower wages and were regarded as non-aggressive and docile. In the shops, they were usually separated from the white workers.

The walkout of the Negro women dressmakers on August 16, 1933, together with the white workers, in one fell swoop upturned these glaring inequalities. Nearly 4,000 joined Local 22 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union during that memorable week, a phenomenal jump from the 600 Negroes who had been members until that time. And Section 7a of the Recovery Act, giving the right to all employees to deal collectively with employers through representatives of their own choosing, made the Negroes confident that they were not jeopardizing their jobs by fighting for better working conditions and a living wage.

These new Negro recruits in Local 22 are employed mostly as finishers in the better dress houses where finishing is an essential part of the garment. Until the strike, their average pay ran from \$10 to \$15 for a 50 or a 55-hour week. As a result of the strike and their union affiliations, their earnings have nearly doubled. Today they start with \$22.75 as a guaranteed minimum wage for 35 hours of work, and the majority earn more than that. Negro women workers in the dress industry are among the best paid of their race in Harlem, where they have a union branch of their own. They take an active part in the executive activity of the dressmakers' organization and have four delegates on the Executive Board--(Lillian Gaskin, Violet Williams, Gussie Stanford and Edith Hanson).

The Dress Pressers' Union, Local 60 of the I.L.G.W.U., has 550 colored members who are ironers of dresses, most of whom are women. To them the Union has been a Cinderella tale come true. Formerly exploited menials, they are now the highest wage earners among the women of Negro Harlem. A recent investigation showed that the wages of these pressers have nearly trebled in the past eight months. Where once \$18 was considered a good week's wages, now \$45 and \$50 a week is thought only normal--and this for a 35-hour week! Dress pressing is a difficult trade and requires considerable speed and skill, and the greater the speed the greater the amount earned.

These Negro women are extremely enthusiastic members of the Unions. At a recent meeting in Renaissance Casino, 138th Street and 7th Avenue, this enthusiasm was obvious on every face and was expressed in shouts and applause for the speakers who were both black and white.

A few more facts.

One thousand colored women have joined the underwear workers' organization, Local 62 of the I.L.G.W.U., since last August. These girls are mostly quite young. They are pressers and earn as much as the white girls,--not as much as the girls in the dress shops, but fair subsistence wages. Within that local they are looked upon as an unusually intelligent group. In many instances they have been appointed by their fellow-workers, both black and white, as spokesmen for the shop before the employer and as the union's representative on the premises, which is a position of great trust and responsibility.

There is the same spirit of equality in the children's dress trade, where about 900 Negro women belong to Local 91. They are considered "one of the best elements of the organization," in the words of Harry Greenberg, manager of the local. Most of them are ironers, and a few are operators. Eight of them are chairladies of their respective shops, and three of them are on the executive board of the local union.

The embroidery workers' organization, Local 66, reports that they have 100 Negro men and women in the machine and Bonnaz embroidery shops where they receive equal pay with the white workers.

The same story comes from Chicago and Philadelphia of standardized and improved wage levels. In the dress workers' organization, Local 100, in Chicago, there are 500 Negro girls, all dependable union workers, and most of them are new members. They, too, joined the union on the wave of the general strike in the dress industry last August.

Thousands of Negro women in Chicago are working in the cotton and wash goods dress shops, but they are still unorganized. Although they are working under the Cotton Garment Code regulations, they enjoy small benefits from them, for in these shops code rules are honored largely in the breach. As there is no union control of working conditions in these shops, the 40-hour week is stretched to 48 and the \$13 minimum wage is being systematically whittled down with or without pretext.

The union in Chicago is now conducting an organized drive among these workers and is employing the pulpits of the Negro churches in the factory districts among other educational devices for interesting these workers in a trade union. The employers have not hesitated to raise the race issue against the union organizers by telling the Negro workers that they will lose their jobs if the union succeeds in organizing the shops, for the union will replace them with white workers.

In Philadelphia, nearly 1,000 Negro girls belong to the well-organized dress union of that city, and they, too, enjoy complete equality of pay and working conditions with the white employees.

The organized group of women in the garment industry, of course, is but a small part of the great mass of Negro workers in the United States, still unorganized and working largely under codes which offer scant protection against greed and exploitation.

There can, nevertheless, be hardly two opinions concerning the significance of the achievements of this group not only for themselves but for the Negro worker as a whole. The fact that this successful organization movement among the Negro workers is not confined to one city, but extends to Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, St. Louis, Kansas City and Los Angeles, offers proof that the trade union appeal is finding a deep, widespread root among them. At the next convention of the national organization, with which they are affiliated, in Chicago, early in June, it is expected that not less than twenty Negro delegates will attend.

Their fellow white members in the I.L.G.W.U. appear to have full faith in the loyalty and militancy of their Negro shop associates. There is, nevertheless, not entirely absent the feeling that the test of ultimate allegiance is yet to come. When the next move comes--on the offensive or the defensive--will the Negro workers, still relatively new in the union, measure up to the full code of labor's fighting ethics or will they be found wanting?

The overwhelming consensus of opinion appears to be that the Negro garment workers will stick to their union guns.

*Opportunity*, 12 (April, 1934): 107-10.

## 28. A LABOR STUDY (SOUTH)

By Ernest Hays Calloway

The day of abstract theories in regard to Negro labor problems is passed. The present demands more concerted action and concrete ideas in order to solve this jig-saw puzzle.

After launching the Recovery Act, President Roosevelt turned to the American Federation of Labor for assistance, as this organization has been for years dominant in the American Labor Movement. After many years through the grace of the Federation's many labor subsidiaries, the government had at last recognized the unequivocal rights of labor. But the A.F. of L. represented only 20 per cent of the American labor membership being composed largely of skilled workers. Unskilled labor never had a "showdown" with the Administration because it never has had a representative. The American Federation of Labor has shown its incompetence in organizing unskilled labor. The Negro constitutes a large percentage of the unskilled labor, and probably that is one reason for the Federation's incompetence. Therefore only a small percentage of American labor is really enjoying the direct benefits of the Recovery program.

In the South, the industrialists have by combined agreement kept the wage to a lower level than in the North and educated the worker that labor unions were something un-American. By this economic exploitation the average southern laborer is kept in a state of semi-poverty and docility, with little or no means for fighting industrial despotism. The Dixie industrialists are fighting the Recovery Administrations with their backs against the wall in order to maintain their low wage standards.

The Negro's position has always been precarious since the abolition of slavery, and the Negro has done very little to change this position. All over the South the Negro is subjected to either extreme indifference on one hand, or utter desperation on the other; on one side are the masses flanked by a great army of those who are not concerned at all about their own progress, and on the other side by a minority group who will stoop to anything, even betraying themselves and others for temporary security, making the really industrious southern Negro hemmed in by a vast legion of "Stepin Fetchits" and a corps of "Uncle Toms." The following paragraphs are taken from a Lynchburg, Va., Chamber of Commerce bulletin, published before the Recovery Act.

"Lynchburg is unusually fortunate as regards the labor situation, for here all demands are met with respect to ample supply both male and female, class and characteristics, intelligence and contentment. The average number of workers employed in Lynchburg manufacturing concerns is 7,000. Practically all of these are native born whites or Negroes, for labor Lynchburg is almost 100 per cent American. There being only a small fraction of 1 per cent foreign born in the city, all of which has been easily assimilated. While most of the industries show a preponderance of male labor, there is an ample supply of female labor, the greatest number of which are found in the textile mills, hostelry mills, shoe factories or clothing industries.

"The Negro population of Lynchburg has been on the wane during the last decade, and the growth of the city during that time has been almost altogether in whites, so the large bulk of labor supply in Lynchburg is skilled.

"The outstanding asset from the manufacturer's standpoint is the character of labor supply. A close survey of labor conditions in Lynchburg will show that

this preponderance of native white labor is of exceptional stock, being descended from Old Colonial stock, which founded the state, and as far as intelligence is concerned will rate higher than in practically any other industrial city in this country. So-called 'cheaper' labor may abound in many other cities, consisting of the raw, unintelligent and inexperienced foreigners who cannot be assimilated or the shiftless, irresponsible Negroes. With these and the numerous problems that their existence brings Lynchburg fortunately does not have to contend. The walking delegate the labor agitator, the wild-eyed bolshevik and radical have no place in this city for Lynchburg labor is too busy with giving a dollar's worth of service for a dollar's worth of wage to worry about unions and organizations."

This same attitude concerning the Negro as a skilled worker existed 14 years ago when a group of civic minded Negroes and well meaning whites approached the management of a hosiery mill, seeking employment for Negro girls. Of course the management excused its failure to employ colored girls by asserting that they were shiftless and irresponsible, which made them unfit for skilled labor. But the civic minded Negroes among them Rev. George E. Curry, prominent Methodist minister, and Professor H. A. M. Johns, local insurance executive, received a promise from the mill owners that they (the mill owners) would open another factory and give Negro girls a trial. The promise was kept, a building was procured, and the necessary machinery installed. A group of girls was drafted, mostly from domestic service in the homes of the well-to-do whites and put on the machines. The conditions were as follows: If the girls succeeded in producing a standard amount of hosiery daily this experimental project would become a permanent fixture in the local economic structure; if the girls failed they were to return to their culinary arts and baby carriages.

The girls were taught to operate the machines and began working. They were handicapped at first because they were expected to come up to the production peak of the white girls, who had been practically born in the hosiery mills, as their parents and grand parents before them had held the same type of job. The white girls knowing all the intricacies of the "game," were able to keep a higher production standard, and too the Negro girls suffered from lack of industrial experience, having been uprooted from the 3 or 4 dollar a week domestic service of whites. They brought the same attitude to the mill as that which the average domestic maintains to her job, an attitude of complete satisfaction with the \$5 or \$6 weekly wage and a lackadaisical interest in her work. They didn't realize that the mill couldn't operate profitably if they didn't come up to a certain production standard. They drifted on without showing any real signs of improvement. Some would work enough to migrate to some northern city, new girls had to be broken in. All in all they served to keep their civic minded sponsors fearful lest any day the project would fail.

Then came the depression. The mill began operating on part time and some time not at all. Many of the girls were thrown out of jobs. After the Recovery Act the mill reopened in full blast. The girls received the 40-hour week, and each girl was to make enough hosiery to insure her 12 dollars per week. They fell below the \$12 a week standard and an investigator from Washington was on the point of having the mill closed, when a committee of citizens went to Washington to intercede for the girls, asking NRA officials to give them another chance. They were successful and the mill remained open on probation.

Some people blamed the machinery for their poor production and three white girls were brought from the white factory and put on the Negro girls' machines and were able to produce the same amount of hosiery there as they did in their own factory.

At present the colored girls are keeping up to \$12 a week standard, once in awhile one will fall a dollar or so below, but not often.

Their success and the future success of the mill depends entirely on the girls themselves. If they remain industrious and gain a better knowledge of their work, rather than indulging in too many outside diversions, they can become an important factor in solving the local Negro labor problem.

As to labor unions and organizations the girls are hopelessly dependent on the manufacturer to carry out the technical provisions of their Code, which makes the situation a bit silly, one depending on labor, and labor depending on the one depending on labor. In fact throughout all the city and surrounding

towns where Negroes are hired in abundance, such as in the foundry works, bark mills and tobacco warehouses, there is not a single organization for the real welfare of the worker, evidence of the lethargic state in which the southern Negro laborer has cast himself.

The white workers are busy as bees, organizing themselves into labor units. And these are the ones who are enjoying the direct benefits of the National Industrial Recovery Act.

*Opportunity*, 12 (June, 1934): 181-82.

## 29. NEGRO LABOR COMMITTEE IN DRIVE TO AID WOMEN

### Campaign Under Way to Win the Protection of Compensation Laws for 30,000 Negro Women in City's Industries

The Negro Labor Committee, through its chairman, Frank R. Crosswaith,<sup>41</sup> announced yesterday the beginning of an extensive drive to bring 30,000 Negro women of the city under the protection of the workmen's compensation law.

Crosswaith said the committee will offer the state legislature a series of amendments that will not only bring these 30,000 women within provisions of the law, but will also "eliminate the procrastination and quite often fatal delay to which many injuries women are at present exposed."

The Negro Labor Committee will establish a workmen's compensation information bureau at 312 West 126th Street to which injured workers, regardless of race, sex or trade may apply for free information and guidance.

"While within recent years an encouragingly large number of Negro working women have been entering industrial pursuits, notably the garment industry," Crosswaith said, "nevertheless, the great bulk of Negro women are still confined to doing service in order to keep body and soul together."

"Contrary to popular acceptance these workers are exposed to many hazards, but as far as the Compensation Law of the State is concerned, they have no protection. At present the law is applicable to these workers only when four or more of them are employed together. The ridiculousness of such a requirement is too obvious for comment," said Crosswaith.

"Also it is not generally known that many Negro workmen now covered by the provision of the Compensation Law are in many instances deprived of their legally required compensation when injured and in a great many cases are exposed in having their case adequately adjusted."

*Daily Worker*, June 29, 1936.

## 30. NEWSPAPER GUILD INDORSES DOMESTIC WORKERS' UNION

The Domestic Workers' Union, which has grown gradually since its organization a year ago by Dr. C. Garland Smyer, has been endorsed by a number of local unions, including the Washington Newspaper Guild, it was learned this week.

A representative of the guild attended the meeting of the organization at the YWCA, Thursday night and brought messages of support from his organization.

The group, which meets at the Y the first and third Thursdays in each month, wrote a letter to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt last week, asking for her sympathetic support, since she has been known to express her interest in the raising of wage standards and the shortening of hours for domestic workers.

### Will Ask Charter

There are about forty active members of the local group at present. When the goal of 100 members is reached, Miss Harriet Short, secretary, said, the

organization will apply for a charter to affiliate with the A.F. of L.

The Launching of the union has been a long, hard pull, according to the officers, and more difficulty will be encountered before it becomes a successfully functioning body. The officers of the local are located at 717 Florida Avenue at the headquarters of the National Negro Congress.<sup>42</sup>

There are very few similar unions functioning. One is in New York City. It includes members of all races, but most of them are colored. The union here is to be open to both races.

The 1930 census of Washington shows that there were 21,000 domestic workers, 18,000 of whom were colored. The union plans to establish an employment agency where experienced workers can be obtained.

Officers for the year, will be elected at the next meeting.

*Baltimore Afro-American*, October 10, 1936.

### 31. THE DISADVANTAGE OF BEING FEMALE AND BLACK

One in every six women workers in America is a Negro according to the latest census figures--those of 1930. In all, nearly 2,000,000 Negro women were classed as gainful workers at that time. How many of these women now have jobs and how many are unemployed; where the employed women are working; how much they earn, and how their wages compare with those of white women workers; these are questions that have a direct bearing on the economic problems of today.

Though women in general have been discriminated against and exploited through limitation of their opportunities for employment, through long hours, low wages, and harmful working conditions, such hardships have fallen upon Negro women with double harshness. As the members of a new and inexperienced group arrive at the doors of industry, the jobs that open up to them ordinarily are those vacated by other workers who move on to more highly paid occupations. Negro women have formed such a new and inexperienced group in wage employment. To their lot, therefore, have fallen the more menial jobs, the lower-paid, the more hazardous--in general, the least agreeable and desirable. And one of the tragedies of the depression was the realization that the unsteady foothold Negro women had attained in even these jobs was lost when great numbers of unemployed workers from other fields clamored for employment.

Not very much is actually known about the economic position of Negro women today. The depression caused serious employment displacements that cannot be measured accurately. However, certain work problems of Negro women are outstanding and may be discussed with some measure of authority. To that end it may be well to discuss what is known concerning the general occupational position of Negro women; and further, something of each major occupational group as to numbers of workers, employment opportunities, hours, wages, and working conditions, and any other factors that may be of special importance.

#### Occupational Status

On the whole, most women, white or Negro, work for their living just as do men, not because they want to but because they must. The reason larger proportions of Negro than of white women work lies largely in the low scale of earnings of Negro men. In their pre-Civil War status it was the ability of Negro women to work that governed their market value. At the close of the Civil War a large proportion of all Negro women--married as well as single--were forced to engage in breadwinning activities. In 1930, at the time of the latest census, it was found still true that a larger proportion of Negro women than of white women were gainfully occupied. Practically two in five Negro women, in contrast to one in five white women, work for their living.

In pre-Civil War days the employment of the Negro woman was almost completely restricted to two fields where work is largely unskilled and heavy--agriculture and domestic service. Agriculture utilized the large majority of workers. In 1930 about nine in every ten Negro women still were engaged in farm work or in domestic and personal service, with more than two-thirds of

them in domestic and personal service. The major occupational shift for Negro women has been, therefore, within these two large fields of employment. What occupational progress Negro women have made has been for the most part in connection with their entrance into the better paid, better-standardized occupations in domestic and personal service. In addition, increases have been shown in the last twenty years in the professions and in clerical work. From 1910 to 1930 there was an increase of 33,000 Negro women in manufacturing, though a small decrease took place between 1920 and 1930. . . .

*Unemployment.* Today, eight years after that [1930] census, though there are no complete statistics on unemployment for the whole country, it is certain that the plight of Negro domestics since the beginning of the depression has been an exceedingly serious one. Certain scattered data such as follow are indicative of the situation as a whole.

In a comprehensive study of employment and unemployment in Louisville, Ky., conducted by the state Department of Labor in the spring of 1933, it was found that a little over one-half of the Negro women, in contrast to less than three-tenths of the white women, were without jobs. More than three-fourths of the Negro women wage earners in the survey depended on domestic and personal service for their livelihood, but the depression had thrown 56 per cent of these out of work.

In a survey by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration of persons on relief in forty urban centers as of May 1, 1934, over two-thirds of the approximately 150,000 women who described their usual occupations in terms of servants and allied workers were Negro. For twenty-three northern and mid-western cities the difference in number between white and Negro women in this classification was not so great--54,000 Negro women as against 37,000 white women; but in the seventeen southern cities covered in the FERA report there were only 5,000 white women, as against 52,000 Negro women, classed as servants and allied workers.

*Household service.* So much for the unemployment of Negro domestic labor. But what about the working conditions of various types of domestic and personal service workers? The largest group, and the one concerning which there is the least definite information as to employment standards, is that of household workers. . . .

From common knowledge, and according to the few recent scattered studies that are available, low wages and long hours are characteristic of household service. In a survey of household employment in Lynchburg, Va., in the spring of 1937, the typical wage of the group covered--largely Negro workers--was \$5 or \$6 a week. Two cases were reported at \$1.50 and one at \$10, and there was one report of payment in the form of a house "on the lot" rent-free, and one of payment made only in clothing. The typical hours were seventy-two a week. There were sixteen reports of eighty to ninety hours and there was one report of a week of ninety-one hours.

A compilation of household employment data for the South in 1934, in which some twenty-six YWCA local associations cooperated, showed that the average weekly wage for Negro workers was \$6.17 and the average workweek was sixty-six hours.

During the period of the National Recovery Administration a survey of household employment in thirty-three northern counties in Mississippi, conducted by the Joint Committee on National Recovery, showed that wages of Negro domestics usually amounted to less than \$2 a week.

An informal investigation of household employment was made in the spring of 1937 by a Washington, D.C., committee representing women's organizations, by inquiries of both private and public employment agencies. The study showed that the general minimum weekly wage at which workers were placed was \$5, and the average was from \$7 to \$10. The chief demands were for mothers' helpers at the \$5 wage, and for general workers. The large majority of applicants were Negro women. Inadequate living and working conditions on the job were reported for many households. In a number of homes no bathing facilities were provided for the workers; too often the bed was found to consist of a cot in the living room or furnace room. Long hours and heavy work were characteristic of many jobs and the difficulty of managing children constituted another problem.

*Laundresses and laundry operatives.* The census makes a distinction between women laundresses who are self-employed, working in their own or their employers' homes, and operatives employed in commercial laundries. In 1930

there still were about 270,000 Negro women laundresses not in laundries, despite the rapid rise of power laundries in the decade from 1920 to 1930. There were nearly 50,000 Negro women laundry operatives.

Though employment conditions generally are better standardized and more favorable for women in commercial laundries than in private homes, the direct influence of home laundry work on the hour and wage standards set by the commercial laundry can be seen clearly. In a study of laundries by the Women's Bureau in 1935, bureau agents were told again and again that commercial laundries, especially in the South, were having a terrific struggle to compete with Negro washwomen. The following comments made by laundry employers, employment office officials, and other informed persons illustrate the conditions at that time:

Since the depression, servants are required to do laundry as well as maid work; most of them get only \$3 a week on the average.

Greatest competition is colored washwomen. Will take a thirty-pound bundle for a dollar. Some of them do a week's washing for fifty cents.

The washwomen charges only 60 to 75 per cent of what the laundry charges for the same size bundle.

The manager knew of a number of washwomen who were glad to get a day's work for carfare, lunch, and an old dress.

Jean Collier Brown, *The Negro Woman Worker*, Bulletin 165 of the Woman's Bureau (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), pp. 1-4.





### PART III

#### THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS AND OTHER BLACK UNIONS IN THE TRAIN SERVICE

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At the 1928 AFL convention the white delegates were startled when a black union applied for an international charter. The application was presented by A. Philip Randolph, a dynamic black socialist who left a career in journalism to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). The union was launched in Harlem on August 25, 1925, to deal with a long list of grievances by the porters working for the Pullman Company.

When federal control of the railroads ended in 1920, the company introduced the Employee Representation Plan, basically a company union, to forestall any effort among the porters to organize. The company controlled the Plan as an extension of its personnel department, even financing and supervising the election of representatives. In 1925, three militant porters who desired an independent union, Ashley L. Totten, W. H. Des Verney, and Roy Lancaster, met with Randolph and asked him to become general organizer of the BSCP. Randolph agreed, and his magazine, *The Messenger*, served as the voice of the new organization.

It was not easy to win recruits for the BSCP. Blacks were disproportionately unemployed and large numbers of them were eager to become porters. Indeed, often it was the only job a black college graduate could find. Despite the stiff opposition of the company, however, many porters were convinced that they needed a union in order to amend the frequently outrageous working conditions.

Headed by Milton P. Webster, a Republican leader in the city and former Pullman porter who became first vice president of the union, the Brotherhood's first organizing drive in Chicago met with a magnificent response. But most local black leaders were unenthusiastic, and chided the porters for being disrespectful to one of the few employers who hired members of the race. The Chicago Whip and the Chicago Defender, two leading black newspapers, advised porters to support the company union. To counter this anti-unionism the BSCP sponsored labor institutes and black labor conferences in the nation's larger cities.

At first the company ignored the Brotherhood, but by the end of 1926, about half of the porters belonged to the union and the company launched a comprehensive crackdown on BSCP members. Under the severest pressure the Brotherhood's courageous battles won the admiration of many liberal organizations, among them the Chicago Federation of Labor, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Urban League. The AFL's president, William Green, granted financial aid and federal status to the fledgling union, and Randolph came to regard the BSCP as the "spearhead" for organizing blacks within the federation.

Even though the AFL supported the Brotherhood, it was not until October, 1935, that the federation granted an international charter to the BSCP. Even more ardent against recognition of the Brotherhood was the Pullman Company itself, which finally announced on August 25, 1937, that it was ready to accept the BSCP as bargaining agent for the porters and maids. The valiant struggle of the Brotherhood to achieve recognition, and the difficulties associated with that effort, are reflected in the documents reproduced in Part III.

Other black railroad employee unions fought similar battles. Because the "big four" railway brotherhoods barred blacks from membership, segregated black unions, such as the Railway Men's International Benevolent Industrial Association, the National Order of Locomotive Firemen, and the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union, also came into their own during this era. Their story also is alluded to in the documents reproduced in Part III.

## THE PORTERS' STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

## 1. A MESSAGE TO THE SLACKER PORTER

ARE YOU A MAN?

By W. R. Shields

I do not ask my friend, if you  
Were born a Gentile or a Jew  
A Buddhist, or Mohammedan:--  
I only ask, are you a man?

It matters not, my friend, to me  
If you are black as black can be.  
Or colored red, or brown, or tan:--  
I ask but this, are you a man?

I care not, brother, whence you came.  
Nor do I seek to know your name.  
Your race, religion, creed or clan:--  
I want to know if you're a man.

I care not if you're homely quite,  
Or handsome as an angel bright,  
If you, throughout your little span,  
Have only shown yourself a man.

I think that most men think like that.  
They hate a weakling, loathe a rat;  
They've always liked, since time began,  
One who is first and last a man.

JOIN THE BROTHERHOOD AND BE A MAN!

*The Messenger*, 8 (July, 1926): 224.

## 4. THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

By A. Philip Randolph

## WHEN ORGANIZED

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was organized August 25th, New York City, N.Y.

## WHO ORGANIZED IT?

As a result of a speech by the writer at the Pullman Porters' Athletic Association on organization, the porters of New York were aroused. Immediately

thereafter Mr. W. H. Des Verney interviewed the writer on the matter of organizing the porters. He called a meeting at his home at which Messrs. Roy Lancaster, at the time, recently discharged A. L. Totten and the writer, attended. The question of organization was discussed and the grievances of the porters told the writer. Upon the facts received in that conference an article was written in The Messenger magazine on the Case of the Pullman Porter. It aroused the porters throughout the country. It was followed up with another, more comprehensive.<sup>43</sup>

After the second article appeared, a mass meeting for Pullman porters was called, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was organized. As a result of that move an intensive organization campaign was launched and branches were established in Washington, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, Mo., and Omaha, Neb.

Opposition immediately arose from some of the Negro papers and leaders who were brought up by the Pullman Company. In Chicago the fight was bitterest but with the able support of R. L. Mays, noted Negro Labor leader, Chandler Owen, Chief Editorial writer of the Chicago Bee; C. Francis Stratford, Prominent young lawyer of Chicago; M. P. Webster, Organizer of the Chicago Division; George A. Price, Local Secretary Treasurer, and W. L. Berry, Field Agent, the Brotherhood went over the top with colors flying. A large number of colored women's clubs of Chicago, as a result of the splendid cooperation of Mrs. Irene B. Gaines and Mrs. Naola Smith, gave their moral support to the Brotherhood.<sup>44</sup>

#### WHY THE WRITER WAS SELECTED TO LEAD THE BROTHERHOOD

First, because of his long advocacy of the cause of organized labor; second, because of the fact he was not a porter and hence had nothing to fear from the Pullman Company. Besides he was the editor of The Messenger magazine, which could be used to spread the propaganda of organization. No man in the employ of the Company could organize the porters as shown by the discharge of men who were merely suspected of trying to organize them.

The right of employees to select anyone they desire to represent them, whether working for their employer or not, is recognized by the U.S. Railroad Labor Board in decision No. 218 (Docket 404).

It reads: "The Labor Board also holds that the employees may vote for representatives who are not employees of the carrier, if they so desire, just as the carrier may select a representative who is neither a director or a stockholder."

#### WHY ORGANIZED

##### Wages

1. To get a living wage.

(a) The present wage is \$67.50 a month. It is graduated upward over a period of 20 or 30 years, to \$90.00.

2. Pay for preparatory time.

(a) By preparatory time is meant time spent in making ready the car and receiving passengers before the departure of the train.

(b) Example: A porter leaving New York at 12:30 midnight for Washington, D.C., reports for duty at 7:30 P.M. Although he works five (5) hours for the Company preparing the car to depart, his time does not begin until the train leaves the terminal station. Upon a basis of his monthly wage of \$67.50, he receives 25 cents an hour. Thus five hours spent in preparatory time represents \$1.25 which the Company deprives the porter of every time he makes this trip. A porter on this run makes the trip twelve times a month, which means that he enriches the Company at his expense to the extent of \$15.00. Over a period of a year this represents a loss of \$180. This is quite an item to a worker whose yearly wage is only \$810, or, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, \$1,278 below the income which is required of the average family in order to live according to a decent American standard. A porter running out of Omaha, reports for duty at 3 P.M. and works until 2:30 A.M. the next morning before his train departs, or his time or wages begins. When it is considered that this is being done by thousands of porters throughout the country, it is easy to estimate what a great profit the Company derives out of this practice.

### 3. Conductor's pay for conductor's work.

(a) There are what is known as "in charge" porter or porters who do conductor's work and porter's too. "In charge" porters are in complete charge of the car. They do the same clerical work of a regular conductor. But they only receive \$10.00 additional pay for said work. Therefore, on each "in charge" porter, the Company saves \$145 a month, since the minimum conductor's pay is \$155 a month. The rule is that when a porter has two cars, he should get the minimum conductor's pay, but the custom is that when there are two cars to be handled, a conductor is there to take charge. The conductor's union protects them to this extent. There are several thousand "in charge" porters in the service. But estimating on only one thousand, it is clear what a great advantage the Company reaps by paying them only \$10.00 additional instead of the minimum conductor's pay, \$155. On one thousand such porters the Company saves \$145,000 every month or \$1,740,000 every year.

## HOURS

### Delayed Arrivals

#### 4. Pay for delayed arrivals.

(a) At present the average porter's train may be late several hours every trip during the month, but he receives no pay for hours spent on duty beyond his regular scheduled hours' because the hours he is late are required to be put in his accumulated mileage column and since he must make 11,000 miles or nearly 400 hours each month, he makes no overtime by being late.

(b) Example: A porter is running on parlor car from New York to Washington, D.C. The porter makes 13 round trips or 26 trips per month. The mileage from New York to Washington is 227 miles or 454 miles for a round trip. Now 13 round trips times the round trip mileage of 454 equals 5,902 miles.

The minimum mileage required for a porter to make a month for \$67.50 before overtime is paid, is 11,000 miles.

The specified lay-over is from the time the train is due to arrive to the time train is due out.

The rule reads: Road service performed on specified lay-over to be paid as doubles at 60 per cent per 100 miles.

The porter running to Washington is due to arrive at 6 P.M. but arrives at 9 P.M., must put late arrival of three hours in accumulated mileage column. If he is three hours late at New York and Washington each trip during the month, he will be late 78 hours. Now 78 hours times 30 miles, the mileage hour rate of the train, will equal 2,340 miles. Add 2,340 to 5,902, the mileage between New York and Washington, a porter makes during a month and it totals 8,242 miles. Subtract 8,242 from 11,000 the minimum mileage a porter is required to make, and the remainder is 2,758 miles, the porter is yet required to make before he is paid overtime.

(c) The Brotherhood demands 240 hours or less in regular assignment as the basis of the porter's monthly wage. This provision will regulate preparatory time, station duty and delayed arrivals.

The Pullman conductors have the 240 hour month.

## DOUBLING

5. Doubling is injurious to the health of the porter. Doubling means leaving for a point immediately the porter arrives off a run, however long. It throws a regular porter out of line and he earns less.

(a) Example: A porter operating a line car between New York and Chicago. From the 1st of October to the 25th makes 5 trips with lay-over periods which expire on the 25th day. At the rate of \$67.50 per month he earns \$56.25. It happens, however, that on his arrival at New York, on the night of the 23rd, he is required to double out of Boston on the night of the 24th and consequently is not able to cover his run on the 25th day.

By doubling to Boston he is placed on the mileage basis and only earns \$1.44, which is less than his day's pay, or 60 cents times 240. He returns from Boston in service on the night of the 25th and arrives in New York on the morning of the 26th and earns another day's pay of \$2.25, which expires on the night of the 27th.

He is now out of line, and has to lay around until the 30th, when his line is due out, without pay. He then leaves New York on the 30th and arrives in Chicago on the 31st and earns \$2.25, another day's pay. His month's total by doubling equals to \$64.44. \$56.25 is the pay received for time put in from Octo. 1st to 25th, \$1.44 is amount received for doubling to Boston, and \$6.75 for three day's put in thereafter at \$2.25.

Now if he did a full month's work in regular time he would earn \$67.50. But by doubling he only gets \$64.44, or \$3.04 less than his monthly wages. By one month's work in regular assignment, he, on a 31 day's month, covers 11,532 miles, an excess of 532 miles over the monthly mileage a porter is required to make before he is paid for overtime. When 532 miles are multiplied by 60 cents, the rate allowed for excess mileage, one gets \$3.18. Thus if the porter had stayed on his regular run, he would have earned \$67.50, his monthly wage plus \$3.18 for excess mileage, or \$70.68. By doubling he loses the difference between what he makes, \$64.44, and what he would have made if he had not doubled, \$70.68, or \$6.25.

#### CONDITIONS

##### 6. Sleep.

(a) Example: A porter leaving Boston at 6:10 P.M., enroute to Chicago, a run of 23 hours, gets three hours sleep on the run; whereas a Pullman conductor on the same train gets off at Buffalo, a run of 11 hours, and gets four hours' sleep during that run.

(b) Porters are never assured of sleep, since they are always subject to a call by the passengers.

(c) No provision is made for the porters sleeping unless upper No. 1 is not taken. If it is taken he must steal naps in the smoking room in the glare of the lights. Nor can he take these naps until every passenger has retired.

(d) Special provision should be made for the sleep of the porters. This could be arranged through a system of relief porters.

#### EXTRA PORTERS

7. Extra porters are not paid if they report for duty and there is no line for them to be sent out on. This is obviously unfair. Extra porters who are required to report at the yard for duty should be paid whether they are sent out or not. They are required to report regularly or be put off the list.

#### REGULAR PORTERS

Regular porters who miss their line as a result of having doubled out, are not paid during the time they are lying around waiting to catch their line. This is unjust. They should be paid for this time spent waiting for their line, since they were thrown out of line accommodating the Company.

Example: If a regular porter running from New York to Chicago is doubled out from New York to Atlantic City upon his return from Chicago to New York, his home district, he will miss his line when he returns from Atlantic City to New York. Hence he must lie around for one or two days until his regular line returns. He is not paid during that time. A regular porter is only paid when he reports for duty and is not sent out if he is in a foreign district, that is, not in his home district.

#### SHOE POLISH

9. Porters are required to buy the polish and equipment for shining the passengers' shoes. If he does not shine their shoes, he is given 15 or 30 days on the street, and, if he shines them and requests pay for same, he is penalized. Polish and equipment should be supplied by the Company.

#### DOUBLING

10. Porters should receive adequate rest before they are required to double out. They should not be required to double out during their lay-overs, except where necessary or very pressing. At present, a porter running from

St. Louis or Chicago to New York is often required to double right out to Boston or to some other point before he sees his family, gets anything to eat, freshen up himself or change his clothes. During rush periods such as holidays, he is given bad hot coffee and buns. This is palpably against the health of the porter.

#### MAIDS

11. Maids don't receive the same lay-overs as porters. Having the same runs, they are entitled to the same lay-overs.

#### SAVING PORTERS' TIME

12. Whenever a porter is compelled to report for investigation, he does so on his own time. Facilities should be so provided that a minim of time is lost, since the lay-overs of the porters are their rest periods and the time for attending to their personal business.

#### DEADHEADING

13. Example: A porter was assigned to a dead-head car, that is to say, a car not in line service. He carried no passengers and had no opportunity to receive tips while enroute. When assigned to the car, however, he was told by the clerk that said car was going to some other destination, to return in service. His car was cut off at some station near Rhode Island where there was no Pullman district or agency. He could not plead shortage of funds or refuse the car, because in doing so he would violate the instructions contained in his rule book and is subject to immediate dismissal for insubordination of duty.

He was held at this place three days and had no way with which to obtain food or wire his superintendent. He was hungry, his car was cold, and he felt miserable. The rule says he must remain with his car, but starvation forced him to desert it, hence he took the first dead-head train back to his district and reported the condition under which he was made to suffer. The assistant superintendent was indifferent. He took undue advantage of his official capacity to assail him unnecessarily in very hard terms. The porter was not able to defend himself in a diplomatic way. The effort was to make him bow his head, and usually the porter does.

Finally the porter was forced to accept a penalty which must be acknowledged by his own signature. Thirty days suspension was the verdict, and this penalty appears against his records, for the rest of his term of service. He refused and asks permission to see the superintendent or local supervisory officer. The assistant superintendent hastened to the office of the superintendent and presented his side of the dispute. The porter was then called in only to find the superintendent was inclined to uphold the action of his assistant. He explained his case to no avail.

The superintendent recommended his dismissal or suggested that he resign from the service. In the latter case he refused and was told he could not go out on the road. Under the Plan of Employee Representation, he has the right to take the matter before his committee on grievances. But the local officials felt that he had no grievance. They blocked his efforts to adjust his case by means of delay. He went repeatedly to the office only to find it hard to interview them. Weeks passed and he was out of work.

Finally he got a hearing and was permitted to take his case to the Committee of Grievances. He discovered that the same official who was in the first part of the dispute was also a member of the committee. With him were four others, as against an equal number of porter representatives. The result was dismissal from the service.

Such is the way the Employee Representation Plan functions.

#### RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

14. That the porters be not subjected to threats, intimidations and reprisals because of their membership in a labor union.

(a) The Company has fired porters because of activities in the interest of the union. It has compelled porters to vote for the Company union by



threatening to withhold their paychecks or to withhold giving them their sign-out slip, that is, hold them off their runs. It has put inexperienced and untrained Filipinos on the club cars in order to frighten the porters away from their union. This is in violation of the seniority rule which the Company pledged to uphold in the agreement with the porters in the last wage conference, 1923. A club car is considered preferential service and supposed to go only to men of long service, efficiency and responsibility. But the Company overrode this rule and placed Filipinos on the club cars over the protest and request of Negro porters who have given probably thirty of their best years in the service.

(b) Under the Transportation Act, enacted by Congress in 1920, any group of workers on the railroads were invested with a right to organize and present their grievances to the Railroad Labor Board, machinery was set up under the said act to handle the workers' grievances. Thus the Pullman Company is violating a Federal statute in opposing the men to organize.

(c) In the Employee Representation Plan of the Company, a clause specifically states that the Company will not discriminate against a porter or maid because of his or her membership in a fraternal society or union. This is Article 6 and Section F. Still it has done everything to prevent the men from organizing from hiring Filipinos to hiring Mr. Perry W. Howard, Negro Special Assistant to the United States Attorney General. . . .

#### ORGANIZATION

1. There are twelve thousand porters in the service.
2. According to the rules of the United States Labor Board, an organization is required to have 51 per cent of the employees of a certain class of service in order to have a right to represent them.
3. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters now has branches in Washington, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Omaha, Neb.

#### WAGE CONFERENCE

4. As a result of the progress of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters the Pullman Company has called a wage conference to take place some time in January, obviously for the purpose of heading off the porters' union. This conference doubtlessly will grant a small wage increase to the porters in order to get them satisfied. But the spirit of the men is so high that it will have no great effect upon them, since they realize that the Brotherhood has compelled the Company to call this conference.

The Brotherhood is not backed by Moscow. It has no connection with communists.

The claim that it is is pure Pullman propaganda.

#### MORAL SUPPORT

1. The Brotherhood is being morally supported by the American Federation of Labor and the Big Four Brotherhoods.
2. It has been officially endorsed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
3. The Civic Club, in a public meeting held to get the facts about the movement to organize the Pullman Porters, endorsed the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

#### OTHER ITEMS

The Brotherhood does not counsel insubordination but efficient discipline. It does not propose to injure the Pullman Company but to help it. The union is conservatively managed and directed so as to make it an efficient and constructive agency in cooperation with the Company for the general improvement of the service on the cars and the development of a high, upstanding, responsible type of porter.

*The Messenger*, 8 (February, 1926): 37-38, 61-62.

## 3. ORGANIZING NEGROES

Organization of Pullman porters in two locals in New York City is of more than ordinary interest. Negro workers constitute an important section of the working class, and because of the color prejudice in this country have generally been kept in the unskilled and ill-paid occupations. It must also be admitted that white workers have also been reluctant to admit them to the trade unions, and in a number of unions they have been definitely excluded.

One of the most hopeful signs in many years is the cooperation of the A.F. of L. in organizing Negro workers. In the case of the Pullman porters we have an example of a class working for a corporation which maintains a company union which, like all such paternal devices, smothers the initiative and independence of the workers and ties them to the corporate masters in a system that is really capitalist espionage.

The Pullman porters often work overtime without pay, prepare cars for occupancy on their own time, receive a small wage which makes them dependent upon passengers for tips, and hours of labor leave them little time for home life, recreation and education. Through organization they hope to redress these grievances, and it is certain that they will be little modified as long as they are in the spider's web of company unionism.

We hope that organized Negro workers will build up a powerful organization, inspire their fellows in other occupations to do likewise and contribute much to the solidarity of whites and blacks which is so essential to a powerful Labor movement.

*The New Leader*, August 29, 1925.

## 4. THE PULLMAN COMPANY AND THE PULLMAN PORTER

By A. Philip Randolph

Pullman porters are efficient. They are loyal. They are honest. They are faithful. This, the company admits. Not only does the company admit it, but praises the porters to the highest. . . .

*Pullman Porters Synonymous with Pullman Company*

When one speaks of the Pullman Company, the first image which comes to mind is the porter with his white coat, cap and brush. In fact, it is a matter of common knowledge that the chief commodity which the Company sells is *service*, and that service is given by the Pullman porters. For comfort, ease and safety, the traveling public looks to the porter. Children, old, decrepit and sick persons, are put in his charge. And the history of the Company shows that he has been a responsible custodian, ever vigilant, tender and careful of the well-being of his passengers. His every move and thought are directed toward the satisfaction of the slightest whim of restless and peevish passengers.

And oftentimes this service is rendered under the most trying conditions. Many a porter is doing duty though he has not slept in a bed for two or three nights at a time. Nor has he had adequate food. Despite the requirements that he be clean, he is often doubled and trebled back without ample time to give his body proper cleansing.

*Treated Like Slaves*

But despite the long, devoted, patient and heroic service of the Pullman porter to the Pullman Company, despite the fact that the fabric of the company rests upon his shoulders, despite the fact that the Pullman porter has made the Company what it is today, the Company, callous and heartless as Nero, treats him like a slave. In very truth, the Pullman porter has no rights which the Pullman Company is bound to respect. So far as his manhood is concerned, in the eyes of the Company, the porter is not supposed to have any. When he is

required to report in the district offices to answer to some complaint, he is humiliated in being compelled to stand for two or three hours before the district officials decide to consider him, while there he is insulted by some sixteen-year-old whipper snapper messenger boy who arrogantly snaps out: "What d'you want, George." This may be a porter who has been in the service some thirty or forty years, trenching hard upon the retirement period. But what does that matter? He is only a Pullman porter. His lot is hapless. In obedience to the mandate of holy writ, when he is slapped on one side of the cheek, he is expected to turn the other one. And if, perchance, under the cross of oppression, of bitter insult and brutal exploitation, he should assert his rights as a man, immediately he is branded as a rattled brain radical, and hounded and harrassed out of the service. Many a tragic and pitiful case may be cited of porters who committed the lese majeste of challenging the injustice of an Assistant District Superintendent, being deliberately framed in order to secure a pretext for persecuting him until his life becomes more miserable than a dog's and is driven to resign. And this porter may be one who has not rendered exemplary service to the Company but has seen a score or more years on the road.

#### *Framing Up Porters*

There are many ways in which to "get" a porter. A porter must be examined, unlike any other worker on the railroad, once every year. Many of them speak bitterly of this method of humiliation and abuse. If a porter is pronounced unfit, he may be retired or fired. Whenever the Company wants to "can" a porter who has the impudence to "speak up" for his rights and the rights of the men, the examining doctor, paid by the Company, finds it necessary to give this particular porter a *very rigid* examination, and he does not *pass*. He is politely told that, on account of the report of the doctor's examination, his (the porter's) services are no longer required. Porter after porter avers this to be a fact. Of course it cannot be proved. But it is quite sufficient that the men assert it to be true. Large masses of men have a way of sensing the true reason for things, however subtly done. It is obvious that grave injustices may be done men, especially the bold spirits, under cover of medical precaution. If a man is up to be retired or fired, as a result of a Company doctor's examination, he should have the right to file a report of an examination in a first class hospital on his case. And the report of the examination in the hospital should be considered final and decisive. But in fact, the porters should not be subjected to a physical examination every year at all. It is unnecessary, discriminatory and hence, unfair. In this connection it is interesting to note that some of the porters objected to a certain Company doctor, and suggested that the Company employ U. Conrad Vincent, a colored physician of high standing, and, incidentally, a former Pullman porter with an excellent record card, but the Company balked. Why? Guess? It may not be so easy to frame a porter through annual physical examinations. The only remedy for this situation is organization. If, when a porter is told that he is unfit for any future service, he could say to the Company, "Well, I will report the matter to my union," a very different attitude would be assumed toward him. It is because the Pullman conductors have their own union that they are not subjected to the degrading ordeal of these yearly physical examinations. It must be remembered too, that there are only one-fourth as many Pullman conductors as Pullman porters. But their interests and rights are not disregarded as the porters' are, because they are organized. The philosophy of organization is aptly stated by an old grizzled farmer, who, while driving through the woods, nonchalantly flicking a fly which annoyed the ear of his horse, next a grasshopper which sat challengingly on a twig, then, a caterpillar perched snugly on a bough, with his whip, but balked significantly when he saw a hornets' nest. Upon inquiry by a cynical friend as to why he didn't flick the little busy hornet, buzzing menacingly on a little spongy looking knoll, he, with a mixture of chagrin and humor, growled back: "Them's organized." What he meant was that that hornet, if flicked, would report his troubles to his union and that union would go to the bat for that *one hornet* who had been wronged. The old farmer knew that he could not flick the hornet and get away with it as he had done the fly, the grasshopper and the caterpillar, because the hornets are organized. Verily, hornets have more sense than some humans, perhaps, most humans. They are aware of the advantage of facing opposition *en masse*.

*Porters' Word Regarded of No Value*

A classic instance in point is the case of a porter who was accused by a woman passenger of having hugged her at two o'clock in the night. She claimed that she screamed and stuck him with a hat pin, that he hollered, but no one came or awoke. This, too, was in a ten section car. She never reported the incident until seven o'clock in the morning to the trainman. The porter denied it. The trainman and Pullman conductor wrote the woman's report to the Pullman office. The case hung on for six months. One morning one of the members of the Grievance Committee, under the Employees Representation Plan, was commanded to come to the office and sit on the case. This porter had been up two nights on the road. When he appeared in the office before the nine men sitting on the case, he pleaded that he was unfit to deliberate on the matter; that he needed rest. "To insist upon my passing judgment on this case, indicates," said the porter, "that either you undervalue your own ability or you overvalue mine, because you expect me to do in a few minutes what it has taken you six months to do, and still you have not finished." This porter member of the Grievance Committee maintained that it was ridiculous to think that a porter would hug a woman in a ten section car, that a woman could scream and not awaken the passengers or the Pullman conductor who was asleep in a berth only two spaces away; and that the porter could yell and not be heard. The accused porter had requested the officials to examine him stripped for the pin prick, but this was not done. The porter-member of the Grievance Committee pointed out that the Company was doing to the porter what a mob in the South would not do to its victim, namely, it was trying and convicting him without his accuser identifying him. He also contended that the woman might have dreamt that some one was hugging her, and the next morning put it on the porter, the most defenseless person on the car. This porter was fired after he had walked the streets for six months. The porter-member of the Grievance Committee was forthwith framed-up and fired because of his manly attitude in fighting for the accused porter. He is one of the responsible citizens of New York. Such rank injustice cries out to high heaven for redress! But there is none except through organized action.

*Sentenced Before Convicted*

This policy of the Pullman Company's putting a porter in the streets immediately he is accused, before he is duly tried and convicted, is absolutely indefensible. No other worker on the railroads is so outraged. If, when he is reinstated he were paid for the time he was suspended, it would not be so bad. But this is not the case. The porter gets nothing for the time he has lost, even though he be vindicated. How unfair! A Pullman conductor who is accused, works while his case is being tried. Why? Because the conductors are organized.

*Where a Porter's Word Counts*

Even a porter's word is revered and respected by the Pullman Company at times. Pray, tell us what time is that, you naturally inquire. Well, it is when the Company is being sued by a passenger. A case in point: Lady "X" was a passenger on car "Z" coming from Chicago. Porter "Y" was on the car. Nine other women were also on the car. Lady "X" got up early next morning and went into the ladies' room. The nine women went into the ladies' room also within the course of an hour or so. After Lady "X" had left the car she discovered that she had lost a necklace worth \$25,000. She reported it to the Company's offices. She threatened to bring suit. The porter was brought to the Pullman offices and questioned. He was asked whether he entered the ladies' room after Lady "X" had gone in and come out; when he entered, if at all. The porter said that when he had women passengers on a car, he made it a policy of not going into the ladies' room. He said that all nine of the women entered the ladies' room after Lady "X" came out. The Company took the porter's word and rested its case on it. Of course, in this case the porter's word saved the Company money, hence it suddenly took on value. As an evidence of the value of the porter's word, a clean record card was produced for him. The Company, by the way, has a way of making out record cards to suit its convenience.

*When Porter's Word Will Count*

The porter's word will never count until they are organized. The present Employee Representation Plan is a *pure farce*. It was forced upon the men. They never wanted it. Many of them say that they would have rejected it if they had been allowed to. They were simply ordered to vote for representatives of the plan. They did so. The Pullman conductors were asked if they wanted it. They said no and rejected it. The porters were not supposed to have the right of choice, hence they were gagged with the plan.

*Porters Should Reject Plan in November*

Because of the failure of the Employee Representation plan to function in the interest of the porters, it is their duty and right to repudiate and reject it. How? By simply not voting for it at all in November, when the delegates to carry on the plan will be voted for. When fifty-one per cent of the porters vote for the plan, the U.S. Labor Board recognizes it as the lawful spokesman of the men. If 51 per cent of the porters don't vote for it, it is no longer regarded as having the right to represent the men. *In as much as the Plan does not represent the porters anyway, they are justified in rejecting it.* To support the Plan is to reject an opportunity to build up your own organization to represent you. The Plan is merely a blanket endorsement of the feudalism of the Company. Under the Plan the porter is merely a pawn shunted here and there at the caprice of the Company.

*Local Management Prosecutor, Jury and Judge*

It is a notorious fact that the porters are the victims of judicial lynching under the Plan. Note the procedure: When a porter is up on a charge, the papers in his case are sent to the Local Committee, the body or original jurisdiction, of the Employee Representation Plan. The Local Committee is composed of ten members: five representatives of the Company, including the Assistant District Superintendent, and five representatives of the porters. Should the Assistant District Superintendent make the charge against the porter, he, at the same time presents the case against him in the Local Committee, sits in the Committee as the jury and judge. If perforce, the Local Committee should convict the porter, and the case is carried to the Zone General Committee, the body of appellate jurisdiction, the Assistant District Superintendent may serve as prosecutor, jury and judge there also. If the decision of the Zone General Committee is not satisfactory, the case may be referred to the Bureau of Industrial Relations, which is under the supervision of welfare workers in the pay of the Company. The Company, therefore, gets the porters going and coming. What is the remedy? *Organization!*

*Company Can Do No Wrong*

In every case where the Local or Zone General Committee recommends the re-employment of a porter, the resolution calling for his re-employment also explicitly states the Local Management is sustained, that is, that the Company's attitude in the matter is sound, just, and correct, but that it is willing to extend *mercy* to the porter. The theory being that, where porters are concerned, the Company can do no wrong. The porter is always wrong. He never tells the truth, is always dishonest. How unsubstantial is this theory! For, note the presence of countless porters on Honesty's Honor Roll. But there is something more behind this theory. There is a desire on the part of the Company to impress the porters with the idea that they have no right to expect justice, that if they get it they would be worse off than they now are. For, logically, if one is always wrong, he cannot expect any improvement in his lot by getting justice. He needs to pray for mercy. Hence the Pullman Company assumes the roll of always forgiving the porters of their sins, of being merciful, the porters being unable, as it were, so reasons the Company, to endure the sentence of stern justice. Now if the porters are standing on the mercy, the sufferance of the Company, naturally, they cannot demand their rights like men. Their only hope is to beg and beseech the Company to take pity on them, don't treat them like grown-up men, but like children, for they are not of age, they are not responsible. Such is the underlying philosophy of the Plan in

relation to the porter. A porter is less than a man to accept it. For if every recommendation of the Local and Zone General Committee is to sustain the Local Management in every case involving the rights of porters, the assumption is that these porters are guilty before their case is heard and they are tried. And if they are always guilty, what on earth is the use of trying them. The Plan is superfluous so far as the interests of the porters are concerned. It simply serves to whitewash the Company and to emphasize the criminality of the porters. Thus the Plan is a menace and ought to be rejected. No other group of workers on the railroads or in the Pullman Company is a victim of such a trick plan.

*P.P.B.A. Company's Trap*

But the Employee Representation Plan is not the only snare of the porters. The Pullman Porters' Beneficial Association is another joker. The P.P.B.A., together with the Employee Representation Plan, were devised to break up the efforts of the men to organize a *real union*. Practically all of the members of the Board of Directors of the P.P.B.A. have soft berths in the pay of the Company. *This makes them safe and usable*. While the money in the P.P.B.A. belongs to the porters it is controlled by the Company. Not a dime can be drawn without the O.K. of the Company's Treasurer. *The Company controls the P.P.B.A. by controlling its officials.*

Pullman porters take notice: Your funds are secure. They are deposited in the Locomotive Engineers' Bank of New York City. A certified accountant is handling your books, which means that they are absolutely accurate. All persons handling your money are bonded.

A.P.R.

Though it is supposed to be a benevolent organization, the local bodies are compelled to raise a fund through voluntary contributions to help members when in distress, despite the fact that each member pays \$26 a year dues to the organization.

*Organization Only Hope*

That organization is the solvent key of the problem of the porters is generally admitted by all groups of workers on the railroads.

The Big Four Brotherhoods have long since urged the porters to organize, because it strengthens the bargaining position of the Big Four.

*"Doubting Thomases"*

But notwithstanding the overwhelming sentiment in favor of the organization of the porters, there are some doubting Thomases among them. Some of them have "lucrative runs" and many stripes. They ask such silly questions as: Can it be done? Think of it? Why every other group on the railroad is organized. Are the porters the most ignorant group of workers on the roads? The Company could not prevent the Pullman conductors from organizing. Why should the porters permit it to prevent them from organizing? If organization has helped the conductors, the engineers, firemen, switchmen, trainmen, maintenance-of-way men, why will it not benefit the porters? Only a few porters have good runs. The large majority have *starvation runs*.

*Porters Have Nothing to Fear*

There is no reason for the porters holding back from organization on account of any fear. The railroad workers and public opinion are on their side. And when they organize they will not only have *right* but they will also have *might* on their side.

Porters should beware of smoke screens, canards and schemes to divide and conquer them. This is a device to which the Company will readily resort immediately it finds that the men mean business. It will seek to pit the southern against the northern porters, and the American against the West Indian. This, porters must guard against. Show that you have a higher sense of race solidarity. Whencesover we have come, we have a common heritage, common source,

common interests and common enemies. Thus ours should be the slogan: each for all and all for each.

A concrete start has been made in New York to organize the twelve thousand Pullman porters. Every porter should rally to the call. None should shirk. All should work. The only test of a porter's sincere interest in the welfare of himself and the men is to join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. It is your only refuge. Demonstrate for once that you have spirit, guts, independence, manhood and the will to be freemen.

With a real union, the porters can get the 240 hours or less in regular assignment as a monthly wage basis. The Pullman conductors have it. But they only got it because they are organized. With a real union, the porters can demand and secure pay for the time they spend in making ready a car to go out on the road. As it is a porter may report at the yards at 3 P.M. and work on his car until 7 P.M., the scheduled time for his car leaving the station, but he receives nothing for this time he has worked for the Company. This is obviously unfair. But the only remedy lies in organization. With Organization, the men can get more respect from the underlings of the Company who are far more oppressive than the big bosses.

Down through the ages you will find the militant injunction: He who would be free must himself strike the blow, is still true.

*Pullman Porters, Attention!*

"My pledged Word:" Don't worry about your leadership selling you out. Every Pullman porter in the service will cut his throat before I will desert the movement. May I say now that all of the millions of the Pullman Company could not cause me to desert you.

A. Philip Randolph

*The Messenger*, 7 (September, 1925): 312, 314, 335-36, 339.

## 5. COMPANY UNIONS A LA PULLMAN

By R. W. Dunn<sup>45</sup>

"The cards are stacked against us. The company officials serve as prosecutor, jury, and judge in the committee. Whether a porter is right or wrong, the company is always sustained. Why? Because the plan belongs to the company."--From a statement by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the process of organization, 1925.

In the year 1920 the Pullman Company established an "Employee Representative Plan" to apply to all its workers in the shops and on the cars. The company plan was devised to forestall unionization and to keep down labor troubles. Let us examine first its application to the 12,000 colored porters who work for this Company. What happened to them under the Plan?

### Discrimination

Like other such plans the Pullman constitution declares in Article 6, Section C, "There shall be no discrimination by the company or by any of its employees on account of membership or non-membership in any fraternal society or union."

This section has been repeatedly violated ever since the plan was put into operation. Says A. Philip Randolph, General Organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping-Car Porters, in the *Nation*, September 30, 1925.:

"Since the movement began to organize the porters through a series of articles in the *MESSENGER*, the men have been repeatedly called into the office of the company and questioned as to what interest they have in the movement. When a mass meeting was arranged at the Elks Auditorium in New York City . . . the men were threatened with discharge if they attended."

Apparently "no discrimination" and the following statement are perfectly compatible in the mind of the Pullman management. From the *Railway Age*, December 24, 1920, page 111-4:

"In submitting the plan to its employees, the Pullman Company makes it clear that the right to hire and discharge, management of the properties, and the direction of the working forces shall be vested exclusively in the company." The employees' Representation Plan is designed to settle grievances arising in connection with the working out of the company functions."

#### How the Plan Works

Even before the campaign for the porters' union began, the plan had been prevented to the uses of the company in its policy of keeping the porters in subjection. When the plan did not work out to the interests of the company it simply violated its provisions quite openly.

Take the case of the porter on a car in the Baltimore yards. It was the day of the Army and Navy football game with especially heavy traffic. The porter X had finished making up his car and had then helped a number of other porters make up theirs in preparation for the evening rush. Having finished, he was leaving the yards when the superintendent halted him and told him he had no business to go, that he should return and help the others. Porter X informed the superintendent that he had already done so, and proceeded on his way out of the yards, but not before the superintendent had taken his name. The superintendent wrote at once to the porters' district superintendent in New York asking for his immediate discharge for talk and conduct unbecoming a porter. The New York superintendent looked up the record card of X and found it was without a blemish; he had been five years in the Pullman service.

In view of this fact, the New York superintendent asked the Baltimore superintendent to reconsider the case. The latter refused. The New York superintendent then asked the general manager in Washington to review the case. The latter, after consultation with the Baltimore superintendent, could obtain no other recommendation from him but discharge. Finally, the case was referred to the Operation Department in Chicago and X was summarily dismissed, although the New York superintendent as well as the Washington official had both been loathe to recommend it, and although the porter had an absolutely spotless record card.

Here was a clear case for the Plan to handle. So after the discharge the grievance was taken up by the district committee of ten, all of whom, including the five representatives of the management, voted for X's reinstatement. Under the provisions of the Plan this should have ended the matter. But when the committee's recommendation was sent to the Bureau of Industrial Relations of the Pullman Company at Chicago, they passed it on to the management which turned down the recommendation of the committee. Finally, after many complications, the case was appealed from the District Committee through what is known as the Zone General Committee, the next higher appeal body, where by a vote of 18 to 2, Porter X was upheld. The Committee recommended that he be returned to work. But at the same time the management was sustained (it always is as against the porters) in its position although the porter was returned to his job, however without his lost pay. Under the Plan, as advertised and displayed for public approval, the case should have been finally decided by the Committee of first instance and X returned with full pay for his lost time.

Another case illustrates how the Plan serves as a graveyard for grievances. A porter is discharged during the union campaign. It is intimated to him by the management that he is dropped because of a wire received from Chicago. Why? Because he was known to be very active in support of the newly organized union. The man has an absolutely clean record card. The local committee, when such appeals are handed to them, are supposed, under the Plan to give a decision in ten days. But the Committee stalls and refused to meet to take up the case. The Porter remains on the street.

Another porter who has served the company for years and who is an active and intelligent local committeeman under the Plan is discharged. Why? Because he sent a letter to the delegates in other districts calling attention to the annual opportunity to discuss wages, etc., in conference with the management, and urging them to state what the men wanted discussed at this conference. One of these letters falls into company hands. His superintendent forthwith discharges the porter because he is informed he has written a letter seeking to "cause trouble" with the company. This "trouble" had consisted partly of the porter's active participation in defending in the district committee the rights of a discharged porter by securing back pay for the discharged man, who had been



reinstated after the charges against him had fallen through. The Bureau of Industrial Relations was forced, through the persistency of the committee member, whom it later discharged, to pay this check, although it first deducted for fifteen day's service.

In other instances the company has completely ignored the provisions of the Plan and obeyed the instructions of superintendents rather than district committees on questions over which the committees, under the constitution of the Plan, are supposed to have complete jurisdiction. A porter returning to his home ahead of the time he was expected, found his wife consorting with another gentleman and proceeded to kick him downstairs. The wife sued for divorce. The porter was called out on the road before the hearing in the Court. The lawyer he retained failed to appear in court, so the porter was held in contempt. Whereupon the Pullman superintendent steps in paternally and tells the porter if he does not pay the alimony to the wife, he will be discharged from the service. The porter refuses to pay, and spends ten days in jail. While he is in jail, the wife goes to Detroit, there secures a divorce, and "takes up" with the other gentleman. The superintendent thereupon tells the porter he can come back to work only when he has proven his wife's infidelity. He produces the evidence from Detroit. The superintendent still refuses to take him back. He appeals to the district committee which votes 6 to 4 to put him back to work, and so recommends to the Company's Bureau of Industrial Relations in Chicago. But the Bureau refuses to accept the finding of the local committee, takes the word of the superintendent, and refuses to reinstate him. Again the machinery of employee representation is violated, to indulge the personal spite of a company superintendent.

Those porters elected to the local committees who may happen to display any backbone against the company's paternalism, are dealt with pitilessly under the Employee Plan. An amusing incident will illustrate. It is taken from an article by Mr. Randolph, in the MESSENGER, on "The Pullman Company and the Pullman Porter."

"A classic instance in point is the case of a porter who was accused by a woman passenger of having hugged her at two o'clock in the morning. She claimed that she screamed and stuck him with a hatpin, that he hollered, but no one came or awoke. This, too, was in a ten-section car. She never reported the incident until seven o'clock in the morning to the trainman. The porter denied it. The trainman and Pullman conductor wrote the woman's report to the Pullman Office. The case hung on for six months. One morning one of the members of the Grievance Committee, under the Employees Representative Plan, was commanded to come to the office and sit on the case. This porter had been up two nights on the road. When he appeared in the office before the nine men sitting on the case, he pleaded that he was unfit to deliberate on the matter; that he needed rest. 'To insist upon my passing judgment on this case indicates,' said the porter, 'that either you undervalue your own ability or you overvalue mine, because you expect me to do in a few minutes what it has taken you six months to do, and still you have not finished.' This porter member of the Grievance Committee maintained that it was ridiculous to think that a porter would hug a woman in a ten-section car, that a woman could scream and not awaken the passengers or the Pullman conductor who was asleep in a berth only two spaces away; and that the porter could yell and not be heard. The accused porter had requested the officials to examine him stripped for the pin prick, but this was not done. The porter member of the Grievance Committee pointed out that the Company was doing to the porter what a mob in the South would not do to its victim, namely, it was trying and convicting him without his accuser identifying him. He also contended that the woman might have dreamt that someone was hugging her, and the next morning put it on the porter, the most defenseless person on the car.

"This porter was fired after he had walked the streets for six months. The porter member of the Grievance Committee was forthwith framed-up and fired because of his manly attitude in fighting for the accused porter. He is a responsible citizen of New York."

#### Company Tactics

The tactics of the company during the porters' organization drive in the fall of 1925 illustrates to what lengths it will go to intimidate workers asked by their fellow-workers to join the union. After a certain meeting held for

organization purposes in New York City, the superintendent in that district called fifty of the men who had been at the meeting into his office before eight o'clock the following morning to ask them why they had attended such a meeting. In the Pittsburgh District the Pullman superintendent openly declared he would fire any porter joining the union. In St. Louis, the superintendent told some of the porters if they were going to be fools enough to join the union they would come to their senses when they found their places taken by Mexicans and Japanese workers which the company held in readiness for any such organization move by the present porters.

It is clear also that the company originally forced through the plan on the porters although it was unsuccessful in getting it endorsed by the organized Pullman conductors. The Plan was forced through among the porters chiefly by the effective use of intimidation. Men who would not vote under the plan were held off their runs and their paychecks held up. Especially were these tactics employed in March, 1924, when the company wanted to get out a record vote on the plan.

It is reported also that when the plan was "put over" in 1920, the porters in one district were handed a blue book containing the constitution and by-laws, and told they could not leave the yards until they had voted under the Plan. They were told that every other district had accepted the plan and therefore this district must accept it. They discovered later that their district was one of the first where the vote was taken. The same trick was employed in the other districts.

Again, the committees, under the Plan, are not permitted by the company to have persons charged with certain offenses appear before them to hear the charges. The defendant is never allowed to face the evidence or to be in the room when the charges are made, often by some prejudiced "welfare worker" serving as a stoolpigeon for the company. In the same manner the procedure before the higher committee is conducted, the charges and evidence against him has been drawn.

#### Pullman Welfare

An interesting type of welfare work is that used by the Pullman Company in dealing with its colored porters. This welfare activity is closely associated with the Pullman Porters' Benefit Association of America, organized in 1920, to which any porter may belong. The association provides him with insurance in which the premium is doubled should the porter leave the service or company. The Board of Directors of the Benefit Association originally consisted of five porters and two welfare workers. But gradually the entire seven have been transformed into instructors or welfare workers on the company payroll at \$175 a month, as compared with the porters' wages of \$67.50. In other words, the company has seen to it that the Benefit Association stays within its control, although an annual election of one porter delegate from each of sixty-six districts still maintains the illusion of democracy. The Grand Chairman of the Benefit Association is one Perry Parker, a high official of the Pullman Company. Not a cent of the funds of the Benefit Association is spent without the approval of the company.

The porters charge that the welfare workers are professional stoolpigeons of the company, prying into the "characters" of the porters, searching for radicals and progressives, making charges against any employee who shows any spirit of independence or criticism. Not only is this type of semi-professional spy provided for by the company, but the voluntary type is encouraged, the porters declare. One of them tells, for example, of a superintendent at the Pennsylvania Station in New York who, at a meeting of the porters, told them: "If you see anything happening in the homes or on the streets or anything concerning our employees which might interest us, we want you to come right to my office and tell me personally. Your name will not be mentioned."

## 6. THE PULLMAN PORTERS BREAK ALL RECORDS

By Frank R. Crosswaith

After chalking up a record that will stand for many a day unchallenged in the annals of organizing workers, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters closed the year 1925 with three monster mass meetings in the Negro section of New York City. During these three days' rally, December 27, 28 and 29, over 20 porters and maids were enrolled in the fighting Brotherhood.

Within the two last weeks in December, 1925, the membership of the union was increased by over 300. The porters have displayed a readiness for and an appreciation of organization that is at once alarming and gratifying. In the short space of four months more than 45 per cent of 12,000 Pullman porters of the nation have rallied to the bugle call of unionism and class solidarity.

No other group of workers in the long history of the working class of America to better its economic and social conditions have shown such results in so short a time. These Negro workers are breaking traditions and establishing the fallacy too long accepted as true, that Negro workers can't be organized and that they constitute the "scabs" of America.

#### A New Type of Negro to the Fore

They have established the unmistakable fact that a new type of Negro is now facing America, and America must heed his presence. Not content with the remarkable successes of 1925, the Brotherhood is out to eclipse its record for that year by energetically pressing forward a program in 1926 which should win the genuine admiration of every one truly interested in the struggles and triumphs of all workers. Organizers will be sent into every state where Pullman porters are located. The South will be invaded, the Far West will, in a few weeks, hear the militant demands and resonant voice of A. Philip Randolph and his colleagues in this veritable crusade of 12,000 Negroes for a chance to live and to rescue their tip-subdues, self-respect from the stultifying and stagnant swamp of tips-taking.

The first meeting of the New Year was held last Friday night, January 8, at St. Luke's Hall, 125 West 130th street; the spacious and elegant auditorium was filled by Pullman porters and their families, cheering every word that fell from the lips of the speakers and manifesting a spirit of determination to win and an appreciation of the serious task before them as to make even an old labor-war veteran marvel at astonishment. For these black toilers were cheering every reference made to a new "social order." "The rights of man must supercede the rights of property." "Industrial democracy," "the class struggle," and many other phrases well known to the readers of the New Leader. The speakers were A. Philip Randolph, General Organizer, Brotherhood Sleeping Car Porters; Mrs. Gertrude E. McDougald, Vice-Chairman, Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers; W. H. Des Verney, Field Organizer, Brotherhood Sleeping Car Porters, and Frank R. Crosswaith, Executive Secretary, Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers.<sup>46</sup>

#### Women Play An Active Part

The role being played in this fight by the wives of these porters should not be permitted to pass unrecorded. In many instances where a porter has been hesitant in joining the union, his wife has sent in the initiation fee of \$5 and then compelled him to sign the application blank. Letters are constantly being received at headquarters, 2311 Seventh avenue, from these women, apologizing for the apathy of their husbands.

One militant wife refused to accompany her mate anywhere in the streets of Harlem unless he joined the union. The wife of another porter, herself in a hospital undergoing a serious operation, insisted, nevertheless, that news be brought to her bedside after each mass meeting of the union. An auxiliary to the Brotherhood, consisting of the wives of porters, is now being organized and already its membership is impressive. The fight of the Pullman porters is the all absorbing topic wherever two or more Negroes gather in Harlem. This wave of enthusiasm and genuine interest in the Pullman porters' fight is confined not only to New York City, but is evidenced where the organizers of the Brotherhood have visited: Washington, St. Louis, Kansas City,

Boston, Omaha and Chicago, all tell the same story.

There is, however, another side to this picture not so rosy, not so fascinating. The management of the Pullman Company is using all the old tricks so familiar to employers who are determined upon the open shop method of dealing with their employee, such as intimidations, threats, shift of forces, withholding of pay checks, paid propaganda who ladle out in large portions the spotless virtues and benevolence of the company, and in still larger quantities the vicious vices and tyranny of trade unions.

#### The Pullman Company's Army of Hired Men

In the persecution of its aims to keep the porters from organizing a union over which the company will have no control, and as a last resort to effect this desire, the Pullman Company has been able to purchase a number of so-called big Negroes, Negro newspaper editors, Negro politicians of the two old parties, Negro ministers and educators, a veritable battalion of "white hopes," to stem the tide of organization among the men. King Canute in his famous injunction to the waves, had more success than these dusky tools of the Pullman Company are having.

In all of the scattered railroad centers, there can be found large stacks of Negro newspapers and magazines containing articles lauding the company and advising the porters against the Brotherhood in particular and trade unions in general. These are given away to the men. Quite a few of these papers were born since the porters began to unionize, others were on the verge of collapse; now, however, while they are being well supplied with Pullman money, it can be surely said, their circulation and influence among Negroes has decreased, and their duly earned fate patiently awaits them, for the porters will not read them; the aroused men and women of the race will have nothing to do with them, and it is a certainty that as soon as the Pullman Company is convinced--as it should be by now--that these Negro editors can't produce the desired results, it will withdraw its support and the result will be a natural death for these sheets, a fate well deserved, and one that all workers, black and white, will hail with a song of satisfaction.

There are a few outstanding exceptions, however--such newspapers as the Washington Tribune, the Pittsburgh Courier, the New York Age and the New York Amsterdam News. They have thrown their lot in with the porters and are standing by them most admirably; these papers are not found in railroad yards to be freely distributed by the Pullman Company, but in the homes of the porters. Within the next two or three months, it is expected that over the required 51 per cent of the men shall have been enrolled and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters will take the case of the much abused and brutalized Pullman porters before the Railroad Labor Board or whatever agency will succeed it.

#### When the Negro Will Assume His Proper Place

The men are asking and should receive the unstinted support of all who are truly interested in the Negro, for it is not by singing "the spirituals," or by rhapsodizing about "the old time religion," that the Negro will be able to take his place in the world of men, but by harnessing his powers of production into labor organizations and his consuming powers into genuine co-operatives, will he be in the position to contribute his share in the making of a new society, dedicated to democracy in industry and one in which those who do the world's useful work, will reap the full social value of their labor.

THE REAL PROLETARIAT OF AMERICA IS AT LAST BEING AROUSED! ALL HAIL THE DAY!

*The New Leader*, January 16, 1926.

#### 7. BULLETIN

*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*

#### Pullman Desperation

The Pullman Company is desperate. It has lost its head, because of the

stable, challenging power of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The Company is desparate because the porters are sticking to the Union, standing firm for their rights. *The Company is desperate because it has discovered that it hasn't got millions enough to buy the Brotherhood.* This, the Company never dreamed of, for it has the psychology that *every Negro is for sale.* It gets this attitude from the types of Negroes it pays to serve as its tools, its servile vassals.

Frantically, the Company exclaims, "What kind of Negroes are these Brotherhood leaders anyway whom a white man's money can't buy?" Of course, the Company labors under the delusion that all Negroes are like porters: Doctor (not M.D.) D. Watson, H. W. Lucas, and S. H. Webb and a host of other time-serving, hat-in-hand Negro lackeys. But the Company is wrong. Fortunately, there are some Negroes who have a high regard for their self-respect, honor, manhood and race-Negroes who are undaunted by power and uncorruptible by gold. This type of Negro composes the Brotherhood.

Now the Company is using Watson, Lucas and Webb and a host of other Uncle Toms, who have a wishbone where a backbone ought to be, to villify, lie on and misrepresent the Brotherhood and its leaders. *These same Negroes would be kicked out of the Company tomorrow if one passenger wrote a letter complaining against them and they know that, still they yell for the Employee Plan, which they know in their hearts is pure Pullman bunk.* They are making fools of the Pullman Company, for they tell the Company what the Company wants to hear, namely, that Negroes won't stick to anything long. They scream about being loyal to the Company, as though it is disloyal for porters to organize for decent wages. No such hula-balloo is being made about Pullman Conductors' disloyalty, yet they are organized. Of course, even Negro Pullman stool-pigeons, such as Harry Hull, whoever he is, know that Brotherhood men are not disloyal, but they are simply saying this for little extra hand-out.

But the Company's Negro stool-pigeons cannot save the Employee (mis)Representation Plan. The Brotherhood, with the flaming unquenchable determination of its members, is marching on to victory. A decision from the Interstate Commerce Commission is expected any day. Our task is to organize the unorganized porters and pay dues, and the Brotherhood cannot lose, even if the decision of the Commission were not favorable.

Your faithful servant,  
A. PHILIP RANDOLPH,  
General Organizer,  
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

Pamphlet (N.P., N.D.) in possession of the editors, March 6, 1926.

## 8. PULLMAN "COMPANY UNION" SLAVERY

By Robert W. Dunn

Last month we set forth some of the hypocrisies of company unionism on the Pennsylvania Railroad System. This month we shall examine a near relative of the P.R.R., the company that makes and operates sleeping and chair cars--the infamous Pullman Company. Its financial guardians are Morgan, Vanderbilt, Marshall Field and several banks that also take the exploiter's toll from the Pennsylvania lines.

The Pullman Company has never been in love with labor unions. For evidence on this point look up the records of the Industrial Relations Commission of 1916; examine the story of the great Pullman strike of 1894; consult the officials of the carmen or the sleeping car conductors who have had to deal with this company during the last few years. And finally, take into consideration the present merciless manoeuvres of this rich corporation in fighting off the unionizing efforts of its 12,000 train porters. It is with these porters and their union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and the relation of that union to the "company union" that this article is chiefly concerned.

First let us examine this "plan of employee representation," which so closely resembles the anti-union schemes adopted by other American companies within the last six years. It is "offered to our employees," says President E. F. Carey of the Pullman Company, "for the purpose of handling expeditiously and settling promptly and fairly all questions which arise as to wages, working conditions, and such other matters as may be important to the welfare of the employees." It is a joint committee type of plan as on the Pennsylvania, with "representatives" speaking for the management, and others supposedly elected freely by the workers. Unlike some other plans, however, the Pullman plan explicitly reserves the right to have the last "say" in every dispute that cannot be settled in the joint councils. All such matters are referred to the Bureau of Industrial Relations "and the decision of the bureau shall be final." This bureau is simply the company's labor or personnel department.

The plan, as is customary, promises no discrimination to any worker by reason of his membership in any union or fraternal order, but "the right to hire and discharge shall be invested exclusively in the company." To be sure the workers' representatives may bring up a discharge as a grievance--but remember the Bureau of Industrial Relations has the final voice. In other words the company can dispose of any worker who may prove troublesome to its plan, and its pursuit of profits.

#### Totten and Lancaster<sup>47</sup>

In actual operation the plan has proved a fraud and a crooked, hypocritical device to hypnotize the workers and destroy their solidarity. The evidence under this head is overwhelming. Men have been fired out offhand not only for displaying an interest in the trade union, but merely for carrying out their duties as "representatives" in an effort to squeeze what justice they could out of the company scheme.

A. L. Totten was one of those who tried to make the plan work in the interest of the porters. As a properly elected representative he attempted to stand up for the men who had elected him. For handling one or two of their grievances in a manner that showed the company he had courage and backbone, he was handed his discharge papers and dismissed for "insubordination and unsatisfactory service."

Another well-known and highly respected porter, Roy Lancaster, was elected under the plan to represent the men. He tried to get them together for a wage conference last year--the company, it should be noted, has no regular date for calling conferences under its plan--and sent out a letter to other representatives asking them to formulate their demands. As soon as this letter came to the attention of the company he was set down as a "trouble maker" and discharged from the service.

Others like S. E. Grain have been removed without any stated reason for their discharge, but to all who have watched the Pullman Company in the last few months it is obvious that activity in the union has been the sole reason.

Still another porter, with a clean twenty-year service record happened to be in St. Paul on a run and attended an organizing meeting of the new union of which he was not even a member. He was called to the Pullman office the next morning and placed on the "extra list"--a man who had been on the same regular run for fourteen years straight! The order for his virtual discharge came, it was explained, from the general office. The local officials could do nothing to help him. They would not tell him what he had done, why he was being let off. . . . He is still trying to get back on his run.

Other reprisals have been visited on the porters who have had the courage merely to attend meetings of the new union. One man in St. Paul--also a 20-year man--was laid off his run on January 20th. He is still off, although not definitely discharged from the service of the company.

There is nothing unusual about this practice. It is the first weapon of any anti-labor corporation in countering an effort to organize its workers. It is merely interesting to observe the no-discrimination pretensions of the company union plan in contrast with its actual workings.

#### "Elections?"

The eighteen delegates who attended the company union conference in Chicago

in January were hand picked by the Pullman Company. Of course the usual pretense of "free elections" was made. But the results showed that no delegate who had not been virtually pledged in advance against the porters' union had a chance of getting to Chicago. In the first place many of the organized porters refused to participate in the elections in spite of all the threats and coercion of the company. Of the 1,100 eligible voting porters in the New York Central district (New York City), less than 500 voted and less than 400 of these votes went to a certain T. E. Griffin. He was sent to Chicago as a delegate although it requires, under the plan constitution, a majority of the votes of the porters of the whole country to elect a delegate to the conference. On the other hand the same number of eligible voters--some 1,100--at the Pennsylvania Terminal cast 978 votes for a certain porter who was favorable to the labor union. He was not sent to Chicago. Then we have Grand Rapids, Michigan, where some five porters voted. Their nominee, Pearson, was elected to the Chicago conference! And a certain Keene who secured the nominating votes of only 15 porters in the Columbus, Ohio agency was also elected. When one remembers that the Pennsylvania Terminal with 1,100 voters had not one delegate at the conference and that none represented the Washington and other large terminals, one begins to appreciate the magnitude of the election frauds put over by the company in the name of "employee representation." Responsible officials of the porters' union estimate that of the 18 delegates at the conference only 3 secured the necessary majority required by the constitution to elect them!

The elections in 1924 were equally farcical. Sample ballots were mailed out to the various districts with the names of the company men marked with an "x". A porter would be going out to make up his car when he would be stopped by a company official. "Hey, George! Did you vote yet? No? Can't go out on your run till you vote. What's your name and address? All right." The porter would hurry to his car. The official would pull a marked ballot out of his side coat pocket and vote for "George."

#### Contemptible Tactics

In its campaign to smash the porters' union and maintain the dictatorship of the company union there is no underhand work to which the Pullman management has not stooped. Intimidation of every sort has been the daily practice of the company. One porter in Jacksonville who had expressed mild sympathy for the new union was told that he would either repudiate this endorsement or get off the cars. He was forced to write an open letter to all porters attacking the porters' union. In fact it is estimated that 75 per cent of the delegates to the company union conferences in Chicago had proved their loyalty to the company by writing similar letters extolling the plan and slurring the real labor union and its leaders. Moreover, the most popular, independent and competent men were "defeated" in the elections to the conference, indicating clearly that it was a steam-rollered affair solely in the interest of the company.

The company has been clever in its use of propaganda. All the plaudits of the company plan have seemed on the surface to originate spontaneously with persons and papers far removed from company influence. On investigation, however, it has been found that the praise of the company has come from negro papers all over the country in which advertising has been carefully purchased in return for a "correct" editorial policy. The "brass check" has never been so well illustrated as in this systematic pollution of the negro press with company-inspired messages. Then when the newspapers have printed their dirtiest slanders against the porters' union and run scare heads on the leaders "Escaping with Union Funds," the company has stepped in and purchased thousands of these papers and distributed them among the porters. It has tacked the items and editorials of the papers on the bulletin boards and walls of waiting rooms, and done everything possible to tell the porter that the world is against him if he bucks the company. In the official house organ of the company nothing has been written about the porters' union. The company has deliberately sown its seed on the outside where the editorial utterance would appear to come from impartial sources.

#### "Uncle Tom" Stuff

The advertisements running in these papers have often been in the form of

a letter from some "loyal" Uncle Tom, "me-too-boss" porter playing up the glories of the company union or the company benefit association. Samples from these messages bought and paid for by Pullman agents will illustrate the general tone of the anti-labor propaganda:

"Let us not turn over our money to those who will put ropes around our necks and lead us into the corral where we will be put under the yoke and forced into submission to the will of the American Federation of Labor. . . . Let us view with suspicion the baits that are set to trap us into an ignominious position. . . . We do not need the uninvited interference of radical outsiders. . . . Let us remain true to the traditions of our race. . . . Let us maintain the proud record of fidelity that we have built up. . . . Let us stand shoulder to shoulder for our co-operative Employee Representation Plan."

Every passion, prejudice and fear is thus played upon by the copy writer of the Pullman Company. Another half page spread in several papers raises the spectre of unemployment against those workers who dare to join a union and says frankly:

"You can earn an honest living up here (in the North) as long as the great manufacturers see fit to employ you."

Following this threat with the advice:

"The voice of the labor union is the voice of danger, betrayal and destruction. Do not heed it."

So powerful is the whip held over the negro press that out of five such papers in Chicago none dares openly espouse the cause of the porters' union against the intimidation and terrorism of the company union. Indeed, so effective is the choke the Pullman Company can put on the press in general that even the white press, with some exceptions, has been afraid to carry the news of the Pullman porters' battle for trade unionism. Take as an example the debate at which A. Philip Randolph, General Organizer of the Sleeping Car Porters, trimmed Perry W. Howard, a Pullman legal agent. This debate attracted 1,700 people on a Sunday afternoon in Chicago. Invitations and releases were sent to all the Chicago reporters, and they came and "covered" it with care. But not one "stick" of news on this debate appeared in any of the capitalist sheets the following day.

#### The Case of Perry Howard

This Perry Howard, incidentally, illustrates the Pullman propaganda tactics. Howard is a Republican politician from Mississippi. Although on the payroll of the U.S. Department of Justice as a special assistant to Attorney General Sargent, he has been released to work for the Pullman Company in heading off union organization and scattering lies about the "red" character of the Union. The contribution of this colored Judas to the issues involved in this controversy are summed up in the following expression: "The economic salvation of the race lies in the good-will of the capitalists. Attempts to creat ill-will between the colored people and the capitalists are for the purpose of exploitation." He follows this up with the threat that the company will import Filipino workers to man the sleeping cars if the negroes against their wages of \$67.50 per month. And adds that to pay the porters a living wage would bankrupt the Pullman Company--which in its last annual report shows the largest gross revenue in the history of the corporation, amounting to \$84,000,000 with a net income of nearly \$16,000,000 equivalent to nearly \$12 a share on its capital stock.

In addition to the "representation plan," one of the most effective company devices for enslaving the porters is the Pullman Porters' Benefit Association, (organized in 1920) which some of the Pullman advertisements have dealt with in recent months. None of the seven members of the board of this association are porters. Instead they hold attractive jobs as "welfare workers" and their wages are more than double those of a porter. The chief job of the welfare workers seems to be to spy on workers to determine their "loyalty" to the company. The company will inform you solemnly that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Benefit Association. And yet the chairman of the association is a company agent and not one penny can be paid out of the treasury of the association without the O.K. of A. A. Cummings, Treasurer of the Pullman Company! The money cannot be used for any purpose without the consent of the company management. And stenographers who work for the benefit associations do not even dare to attend meetings of the Sleeping Car Porters'



Unions for fear of being fired! The "benefit" of this association all goes to the company. To be sure it writes an insurance policy for the workers at a rate no less than that charged by ordinary insurance companies and much higher than that obtained in labor union insurance societies. If the porter leaves the service of the company the premium is doubled.

#### The Cards Are Stacked

To return to the "plan" itself, it is clear that it is owned body and soul by the Pullman management. All the cards are stacked against the porters. The same local management that recommends the discharge of a porter sits on the local committee as prosecutor, judge and juror in the case. And if the local committee should happen to recommend that the porter be put back on his job the decision is not carried out. The higher, or "zone committees," have no more power. All their decisions are simply referred up to the management in Chicago which decides according to its own whim the fate of a porter. And no matter what the decision in any of the committees, the management is always sustained as a matter of form. Moreover, the committees are not permitted to have persons charged with offenses appear before them to hear the charges. The defendant is never allowed to face the evidence or to be in the room when the charges are made, often by some prejudiced "welfare worker" serving as a company stool-pigeon. In many instances, also, the plan has served as a literal graveyard for grievances, the company dupes stalling and delaying and refusing to take up the case of a worker bringing an appeal. The worker remains on the street while he slowly awakens to the realization that the plan is a farce and a joke.

*Labor Age*, 15 (March, 1926): 1-4.

### 9. THE NEW PULLMAN PORTER

By A. Philip Randolph

A new Pullman porter is born. He breathes a new spirit. He has caught a new vision. His creed is independence without insolence; courtesy without fawning; service without servility. His slogan is: "Opportunity not alms." For a fair day's work, he demands a fair day's wage. He reasons that if it is just and fair and advantageous for the Pullman Company to organize in order to sell service to the traveling public, that it is also just and fair and advantageous for the porters to organize in order to sell their service to the Pullman Conductors to form an organization of, by and for themselves, it is to the best interests of the Pullman porters to form an organization of, by and for themselves. He has learnt from experience that the Company Union sugar-coated the Employee Representation Plan cannot and will not serve his interests any more than it can or will serve the interests of the Pullman conductors, the engineers, switchmen, firemen, train conductors or trainmen. He has common sense enough to sense the face that the Plan is the darling creature of the Company, hatched and nourished for the benefit of the Company, not the porter; that he can no more get justice at its hands than could a rat get justice before a jury of cats. His doctrine is that the best kind of help is self-help expressed through organized action.

The new Pullman porter is a rebel against all that the "Uncle Tom idea" suggests. The former possesses the psychology of let well enough alone. The latter that of progressive improvement. The former relies upon charity and pity; the latter upon his intelligence, initiative and thrift. The old time porter is afflicted with an inferiority complex; the new porter logically takes the position that a man's worth in society is not the result of race, color, creed or nationality; but that a man's worth is based upon the quality of his service to society.

The old time porter assumed that a clownish grin or a "buck and wing" was a necessary part of the service in order to extract a dime tip from an amused and oftentimes a disgusted passenger; whereas, the new porter believes that intelligence and dignity and industry are the chief factors in service of quality

and value. As a service agent, the new porter seeks to anticipate the desires of his passengers with a view to making their travel ideal. He realizes that his service is a representative form of salesmanship for the Company to the public, and for himself to the Company and the public. His work is not alone regulated by the mechanical requirements of the service, but out of his rich and full experience, he is ever formulating new and higher forms of service. Many constructive and practical ideas lie in the heads of porters who are reluctant to reveal them because they feel that they neither get the proper appreciation or reward from the Company for them. A just wage stimulates the employees to give their best to their employer; it develops a larger interest in the job and a joy in performing a high type of workmanship.

The new porter is not amenable to the old slave-driving methods, his best service is secured through an appeal to his intelligence. Just as he demands fairer treatment than the old time porter, for the same reason, he gives a higher type of service. Just as he rejects charity and pity on the grounds that he is a man, and doesn't need such, so he refuses to make excuses, but performs his duties in accordance with the requirements of efficient service.

His object is not only to get more wages, better hours of work and improved working conditions, but to do his bit in order to raise and progressively improve the standard of Pullman service. The new Pullman porter takes the position that his ability to render the Company increased productive efficiency can only result from his increased physical, moral and mental efficiency, which rest directly upon a higher standard of living, which in turn, can only be secured by a higher, regular income. His insistence upon a regular, living wage is based upon the fact that not only is the tipping system morally unjustifiable, but because tips fluctuate violently in amounts, from month to month, and a porter is for ever uncertain as to how to regulate his household affairs, since he cannot definitely plan on how much money he can spend above his meager wage of \$67.50 a month, on his wife's clothing, furniture for his home, or his children's education. No other group of workers are required to work under such distracting uncertainty. Of course, the reason is that they are organized.

The new Pullman porter believes in organization and is wont to convince the Company and the traveling public that the Brotherhood will be a distinct asset to the Pullman industry in the practical and efficient handling of service and personal problems. He is cognizant of the fact that the security and welfare of the porters are bound up with the steady, continued and sustained progress of the Pullman industry. He is confident that his experience in the service equips, adapts and furnishes him with a peculiar and unique type of training and knowledge which no other employee possesses, and, therefore, renders him highly capable of giving constructive cooperation to the Company which will reflect itself in better service, and, hence better business.

The new porter is not a Communist, but a simple trade unionist, seeking only to become a better and a more useful citizen by securing a higher standard of living and preserving his manhood.

The new porter is not a slacker either on the job or in his organization. He is not content to consume the fruits that the hands of others produce. He is willing and ready to shoulder his share of the responsibility in making conditions better for the porters in particular and the race in general. Nor does he assign his ills to the sinfulness of the officials of the Pullman Company, but to his own failure to sense his rights, duties and powers to right them.

The new porter recognizes the necessity of cooperating with the Pullman conductor, since both are workers for the same employer whose policy is to pit one against the other in order to keep them at logger-heads. Each can get more through cooperation; both will be exploited the more should they permit themselves to be deceived by the Company into believing that their interests are opposed. Though they accidentally belong to different races, they belong to the same class.

The new porter is not flattered by the claim that he has a monopoly on a job which does not yield him a decent living. He maintains that a fuller consideration of the relation of wages to production costs will show wage rates accompanied by efficient management, lower production costs, higher production efficiency and a higher type of workmanship. Higher production efficiency is reflected in lower selling prices, which makes possible service to a larger group of consumers, and a consequent larger volume of trade. The new Pullman

porter contends that low wages encourages indolence, irresponsibility and dishonesty, and hence it is not an economical wage.

The new porter thinks hard but says little.

*The Messenger*, 8 (April, 1926): 109.

## 10. TO THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEES

### *Brothers and Fellow Workers:*

Since we left your district, it is with great pleasure that I can announce that the Movement has been going steadily forward. Everywhere a high crusading spirit is being sustained with a remarkable and assuring constancy. May I say that the permanence and progressive development of the Organization depend upon the intelligence, initiative and spirit of loyalty of the Organizing Committees, the centers of thought and action, the eyes and ears of the Movement. Responsibility and power for the execution of organizational policies reside in your hands. May I urge that you keep ever vigilant over the affairs of your district so that you will be always prepared to handle the situation with firmness, intelligence and wisdom. Our success will depend upon your scrupulous observance of the fact that:

First, the Organizing Committee is a secret body. Its membership and deliberations are to be held with the utmost secrecy. Only the local Secretary-Treasurer shall have access to and sit in the meetings of the Committee, or such other representative as shall be duly authorized by the General Organizer. This policy is dictated by the special and peculiar conditions under which the Movement was projected and must so continue to proceed until it comes into the open. Its primary object is to protect the interests of the membership.

Second, The Organizing Committee shall spare no pains in seeing to it that the district is organized 100%, that every porter in the district gets his membership card. There is a way tactfully to bring pressure to bear on the slacker porter. May I advise, however, that, in no case, should intimidation or coercion be used. Our policy must always be to appeal to the intelligence of the men, the public and the Pullman Company.

Third, The Organizing Committee shall industriously urge the members of the Brotherhood to keep up their dues. One need not emphasize the fact that unless the dues of the members of an organization are kept up, it cannot last. Dues are to an organization what taxes are to a government, they are the economic blood, the prop, the mainstay. These dues help the porters to pay their dues in their churches and lodges.

Fourth, The Committee shall also urge that the Brotherhood men do not talk too freely among themselves while on duty, that they refrain from telling the Company officials or passengers anything about their relations to the Movement, that they think hard, but say little.

Fifth, The Committee shall use its moral influence to impress the men with the fact that they must give better service now than ever before, that they must make time, be industrious and responsible; that the purpose of the Union is not to protect a porter who will not give service or who deliberately violates the rules and regulations of the company, but that each man must show himself worthy of the rights and privileges he is seeking through the Organization. Diligently impress the porters with the viewpoint that with rights and privileges go duties and responsibilities.

Sixth, It is the policy of the Movement that no porter be permitted to speak in the public meetings, fearing lest he be victimized by some of the Company Agents. The men must be advised not to permit their enthusiasm to run away with their better judgment. Advise them to permit their leaders to speak and suffer for them, if, indeed, anyone must suffer.

Seventh, The Committee shall advise and urge that the porters respect the Company officials, both white and black, that they refrain from speaking disrespectfully of said officials. The success of the movement does not depend upon abusing anyone. It must rise or fall upon a basis of the justice and merit of its programme, the loyalty of its members and the intelligence, responsibility, initiative, courage and honesty of its leadership.

Eighth, Advise the men not to rely upon the truth of reports, rumors and propaganda that they see in the publications of those who are interested in misrepresenting the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, but that they should seek their information from the responsible heads of the Movement.

Ninth, Advise the men that their monies are being used for the promotion and development of the organization, the printing of literature, maintenance of general headquarters, branch offices, the paying of the expenses of travel and upkeep and pay of the organizers and regular workers in the Movement; that a certified public accountant surveys the books of the Organization with a view to insuring their accuracy; that the officials who handle the funds of the Union are bonded.

Tenth, The Local Secretary-Treasurer shall confer periodically, that is, twice a month, with the organizing committee, or as often as the committee shall require. The Committee shall meet twice a month. It shall so change the dates of meeting from time to time as to enable the members who are out on the road during one Committee meeting to be in at the next.

Eleventh, The Committee shall seek to maintain a spirit of harmony and concord in its meetings and among the men. It shall frown upon the discussion of personalities that is calculated to foster and engender bitterness of feeling, of trivial and petty matters that do not make for the development and advancement of the organization.

Twelfth, The Local Secretary-Treasurer shall serve as the open spokesman for the Brotherhood in the district. The local Committee's policies shall be presented through him except where there is an organizer who is authorized to present same.

Thirteenth, The Organizing Committee shall see to it that the Local Secretary-Treasurer holds at least one public meeting a month; more, of course, are permissible.

Fourteenth, the Committee shall advise the men through the proper form that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is not affiliated with any organization, although it has the moral support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The American Federation of Labor, The Big Four Brotherhoods, The National Urban League, the Brotherhood of Federal Employees, The Civic Club of New York, etc.

Fifteenth, The Committee shall advise that the men do not misrepresent the Company; that they truthfully report the facts of a case in which they may chance to be involved. Impress upon them the fact that the Brotherhood cannot effectively protect and represent their interests unless it knows the true state of facts relative to any case. Again there is nothing to be gained by misrepresenting the Company. The reaction to misrepresentation is more injurious than beneficial. We must adhere to truth and right and we cannot fail.

Sixteenth, The Organizing Committee must control and dominate by its superior intelligence and moral influence, the election of every delegate to any convention or meeting which relates to the interests of the Pullman Porters.

Your faithful servant,  
A. PHILIP RANDOLPH,  
General Organizer.

*The Messenger*, 8 (May, 1926): 157.

# 11. FIND NEGROES CAN BE ORGANIZED

"The negro can't be organized." How many times we've heard that hopeless cry, and how many times we have wondered whether the real reason behind the difficulty was not the reluctance, indifference or actual hostility of white to unionizing black workers. And now we'll hear Frank Rudolph Crosswaith, international organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Brother Crosswaith, a native of the Virgin Islands, is one of America's keenest negro thinkers and organizers.

"Why, it's all bosh," he begins. "Six months ago we founded this Brotherhood. Today we have 6,000 members and are gaining hundreds more each week.

Actually, negro workers are just as easy to organize--perhaps easier--as white. Intelligence, aggressiveness and a knowledge of negro conditions are the essentials; unions follow naturally just as day the night, because the working conditions of Pullman porters are so wretched that they are only too willing to organize to help themselves."

Crosswaith is scornful of the Pullman company's own pet union, which recently granted a trifling wage increase with one hand, while adding extra work to the porter's burden with the other. An important class of linen tenders at the terminal stations was wiped out when the wage increase was granted, with the result that porters have to be on the job earlier now to care for this initial work.

In a few days Crosswaith was able to organize nearly all the porters working out of Detroit, while similar reports are typical of other big rail centers. The union porters, while taking the initiative in the matter of organizing, are, of course, in need of the help they can get from existing railroad unions and are able to report scores of instances in which representatives of the white unions have given material aid. Whether the new Brotherhood will affiliate with the A.F. of L. or stay outside with the independent railroad Brotherhoods has not yet been determined. The porters prefer first to obtain majority organization on the big lines, thus proving their ability to take care of themselves in their struggle with the powerful Pullman company.

*Locomotive Engineers Journal*, 60 (May, 1926): 349.

## 12. PORTERS STEP AHEAD

The successful future of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has been more than ever assured by the tour of Organizer A. Philip Randolph and Assistant Organizer Ashley L. Totten which took them to the Pacific coast and back to New York city again.

The organizers report that the tour across the country was a huge success. In every city the movement took on city-wide interest and they were able to secure the ablest labor leaders and persons of prominence to support it.

Starting from Chicago on February 10, the organizers held large meetings in St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minn., Spokane and Seattle, Wash., Portland, Ore., Oakland and Los Angeles, Cal., Salt Lake City, Utah, Denver, Colo., Omaha, Neb., Kansas City and St. Louis, Mo., and back to Chicago and New York. In the Twin Cities--St. Paul and Minneapolis--the organizers had no difficulty in breaking down the opposition set up by the Pullman company. The porters themselves merely laughed at the feeble presentation of the Employee Representation Plan made by agents of the Pullman company who were sent there to discourage the movement.

### Seattle Mayor Speaks

Despite intimidation the porters turned out in full force to all Brotherhood meetings and seemed to be proud of the fact that they were connecting themselves with a movement that had created such a great stir all over the country. Evidently the Pullman company did not believe that the organizers would really extend their tour to the Pacific coast, for, when it became known that two meetings were held in Spokane, sending that district 95 per cent over the top, they were amazed. At Seattle the organizers were received by the Mayor and his official staff, who delivered a formal address of welcome. Amid cheers from the vast gathering of citizens who attended, the Mayor said that the Pullman porters should have been organized twenty-five years ago. If they would have their contentions on truth and justice they would soon find that if the Pullman company didn't settle the American nation would.

At Portland the importance of the movement was brought to the attention of the professors of Reed College, who invited the organizers to an interview and gave Mr. Randolph the privilege of addressing the students there.

When the organizers made their first appearance in Oakland they had to wend

their way up a crowded stairway to the main auditorium of the church, while prolonged cheers were given as they were escorted up the aisle to the rostrum by Dad Moore, a veteran porter. A similar demonstration took place in Los Angeles where they spoke before at least 2,000 persons in the largest edifice for Negroes in that city. Mr. Randolph addressed students in the University of California, Berkley, and also the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.<sup>48</sup>

#### Secret Canvass in St. Louis

Salt Lake City, with its small Negro population, turned out in larger numbers than ever before, and the few porters of that district signed up rapidly.

At Denver the opposition of the Pullman Company showed its hand somewhat. A Negro newspaper editor tried to bribe the pastor of Zion Baptist Church with the sum of \$300 if he would agree to close the doors of the church against them. Requests were made of the Mayor to stop the meetings, but instead the Mayor himself and ex-Governor Sweet, a liberal, attended and spoke favorably about the movement. The stop at Omaha was made only because it was in direct line with the road the organizers were traveling, but it is generally known that Omaha comes next to Seattle with a large percentage of union men. At Kansas City and St. Louis the organizers engaged in a secret house-to-house canvass, signing up men who had been told by their superintendent that if they attended any meetings they would be dismissed from the service.

When the organizers appeared at the Metropolitan Community Center, 3118 Giles avenue, Chicago, Ill., on the afternoon of April 27, they found a record crowd awaiting them. There were loud shouts of "Randolph and Totten!" and voices that cheered themselves hoarse as they were escorted to the rostrum. After Randolph's address Miss Mary McDowell spoke, and, in part, said that the Pullman porters were going to have the opportunity of writing their own economic contract. All that they have to do is to join the union and pay their dues. She pledged herself to help in that publicity which the movement should receive and which the Pullman company fears.<sup>49</sup>

#### "The Stool Pigeons' Terror"

One remarkable thing about the trip is that the Organizers challenged opponents everywhere they spoke to debate the question and no one has attempted to accept the challenge. In every district they proved conclusively that the Employee Representation Plan (Company Union) is a farce and that the Pullman Porters' Benefit Association of America is controlled and dominated by the Pullman Company.

By reason of the fact that women showed a great interest everywhere for the movement, they had no difficulty getting up local auxiliaries which will be officially known as the "Economic Council of Women." Professional men of the Negro race are lining up behind the Organizers while many who were opposed and were active trying to defeat its purpose, are found to be converted or driven to shame.

During the tour Mr. Totten was given the name of the "Terror of the Stool Pigeons," because of his relentless attack on all persons who have been identified as spies and eavesdroppers on the porters.

It is admitted that the cause of the Brotherhood has sunk deep down in the hearts of the porters everywhere, and no opposition from the Pullman Company can halt its progress now.

*The New Leader*, May 15, 1926.

### 13. CRUSADING FOR THE BROTHERHOOD

By Frank R. Crosswaith

That a new Negro has arrived in the United States is admitted by everyone

who has been following the development and expansion of the Negro in the arts, and literature. Many people differ, however, in truly identifying this new Negro. Various writers and scholars have tried to locate him, but with very little success. What is new of the Negro in America, is not so much his classical adventures as is his gallant strides made in understanding the social system under which he lives and in a realization of the tremendous importance of economics in an effort adequately to solve what is loosely termed the "Negro Problem." As an evidence of this truth the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is the most outstanding example. The existence of this powerful economic organization will not alone affect the relationships of the white and Negro peoples of the United States, but will divide the Negro race itself upon the basis of their separate interest in the struggle to live. Already this is becoming clearer and clearer as the Brotherhood sweeps forward in its spectacular crusade to bring economic relief directly to the twelve thousand Negroes employed as Pullman Porters and Maids. In this regard it is interesting to students of the social sciences to observe that the most vicious and persistent opposition to the organization of these workers has come from some so-called Negro leaders and Negro institutions.

At midnight on March 12th, the writer in company with W. H. Des Verney, Assistant General Organizer of the Brotherhood, left New York City for a short trip in the interest of the Organization. Our itinerary called for stops to be made at Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Buffalo, and Albany, in the order in which they appear. Pittsburgh is considered one of the most solidly anti-union industrial centers in the eastern section of the United States. We found it living most scrupulously up to this reputation. But more than this, we found that the Pullman Company exercised no ordinary amount of influence upon the Negroes of Pittsburgh and upon the institutions supposedly belonging to Negroes. Negro churches and social agencies were particularly influenced to such a degree that for a time it seemed as though the Brotherhood's message would remain undelivered in Pittsburgh. It required exceedingly agile maneuvering on the part of my colleague and I in order to overcome this influence and so accomplish something constructive among the porters there. The district is reputed to have about 300 to 350 porters. The men are governed by Superintendent Kaine. He is pictured by some of the local porters as a true personification of the czarist philosophy. "I am monarch of all I survey; my rights there are none to dispute." Like all men of this type, say these porters, he has surrounded himself with a few faithful hirelings to whom an appeal to race, to honor, or to those finer qualities to which the average man responds have little or no effect whatever, but whose conduct squares best with the old barbaric command, "Slave, obey thy master." Some of the more manly and honorable porters in Pittsburgh are rigidly opposed to having Harry T. Jones as instructor of Pullman porters. It is common knowledge in Pittsburgh, however, that Harry T. Jones is very well liked by his immediate superior, because of "efficiency of service." One porter said: "Why, Mr. Crosswaith, if we have chicken for dinner, that fact is known in the office of the Superintendent next morning. If we buy a decent rug for our homes, that, too, is immediately reported, and as a result of our efforts to brighten our homes, we are usually penalized."

We were informed by a prominent social worker that a Negro institution, ostensibly for social purposes was being used as an agency for spying on the activities of prominent Negro agitators especially those with an economic program. One of the agents of this outfit, she said had made several visits to New York where he attended the mass meetings of the Brotherhood, and that on one occasion she read his report and saw the writer's name coupled with that of the promoter of the American Negro Labor Congress. Whether this bit of information is true or false, Pittsburgh still remains the ancestral home of "stool pigeons."

It was only after we were successful in getting before the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Pittsburgh and vicinity, composed of 150 ministers with a combined congregation of approximately 45,000 persons that we were able to overcome the opposition. The Conference adopted the following Resolutions endorsing the Brotherhood and exhorting Baptist Clergy and laymen everywhere to give the Pullman Porters all moral and financial support possible.

"Whereas, We, the undersigned ministers, representing the Negro Baptist Ministers' Conference of Pittsburgh and vicinity, with 150 churches and a combined congregation of approximately 45,000 persons, after hearing the address of Frank R. Crosswaith, a representative of the Brotherhood of Sleeping

Car Porters, do hereby go on record unqualifiedly endorsing the gallant efforts being made by this group of Negro workers to strengthen their chances in the struggle to live by organizing a union. And, Whereas, we endorse this movement because we feel that in organizing a union, through which to protect their interest, they are doing no more than workmen of other races have done and are doing. We also endorse this movement because we believe that if these men succeed with their program their success will tend to encourage race workmen everywhere to harness their producing powers for the purpose of improving their economic, social and educational status, making generally for the betterment of the human race. And, Whereas, we unhesitatingly condemn those who, being devoid of vision and race pride, have lent their time, ability and their position to misrepresent this great movement and thwart its progress, especially those ministers of the gospel who, in this instance, have substituted the Cross of Christ for a cross of gold in order that they might stand with those who would keep this body of Negro workers from exercising their inalienable right to life, liberty and happiness. Therefore, be it Resolved, That we, the Baptist ministers of Pittsburgh and vicinity in conference assembled, do hereby pledge unstintingly our moral and financial support to the manly and courageous efforts being made by the Pullman porters to organize themselves into a union, to be known as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. And we appeal to our brethren everywhere to aid them in every way possible."

A similar attempt was made to appear before the Washington Conference of the M. E. Church, which was presided over by Bish Claire, but we were unsuccessful in doing so. Evidently, these men of God (?) would have nothing to do with us. The writer personally appeared at the Conference on two occasions and presented his card with a request for the privilege of addressing the gathering on the matter of the Brotherhood. These requests were absolutely ignored by Bishop Claire who was in the chair at the time. Not only were we ignored, but those who controlled the publicity of the Conference saw to it that all other visitors were announced in the press except the representatives of the Brotherhood. No doubt, had a Pullman official appeared at that conference, he would have been permitted to speak, and the learned ministers would have considered themselves rendering a great service to God and their race. Not all the Negro ministers in Pittsburgh, however, have pawned their souls to wealth and greed. For instance, there is the Rev. Dr. C. A. Jones, Pastor of Central Baptist Church and Rev. Dr. H. P. Jones of Euclid Avenue Church. These two men, with a few others, stood out among the ministers of Pittsburgh like a beacon light at night on a dark and storm-swept sea.

Nevertheless, after spending considerable time there, we left with a goodly percentage of the men having signed up as members of the Brotherhood. It might be well here to state that since leaving Pittsburgh, the men of that district have been steadily coming into the Organization.

In Cincinnati conditions were a little more pleasant. There we were fortunate in being in a city where the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America has a strong organization. These white working men, without being requested to do so, turned over to us their large assembly room, located in the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks Building for our mass meetings. It is said to be the first time that Negroes were ever in the building in any other capacity than that of servants. We held two meetings there, which, while they were not overflow meetings, were of tremendous propaganda value to our Organization, and we enrolled quite a number of local porters before our departure.

Detroit proved to be a paradise. Meetings were held there both mornings and evenings, and they were all well attended. There was not a single meeting at the close of which the Brotherhood was not stronger by six to thirteen new members. Cleveland was the next stop, and proved equally as fertile as Detroit, if not much more so. The Aldun Hotel (hole in the wall) in which our meetings were held witnessed a constant stream of proud porters flowing forward to join the ever-swelling ranks of the Brotherhood. The white newspapers gave us splendid publicity. In Buffalo we conducted our meetings, two each day, in Evans' place, just opposite the railroad station. These meetings were well attended, and like those in Detroit, and in Cleveland, took on, in many instances, the appearance of gigantic mass meetings. At the close of each meeting my colleague and I were literally swamped with applicants. Albany not having very many porters left for us to enroll, our visit there was very short. We returned to New York City on the night of April 14th, after covering nearly 2,000 miles of territory.



We delivered together almost 100 speeches in the cause of the Brotherhood in particular and labor in general. The trip on the whole was a splendid triumph for our cause; it convinced us thoroughly of the fact that the Negro workers of the United States are at last awakened to the important part played in their lives by the economic factor and that truly a new Negro faces America; that he is ready for the gospel of economic emancipation, and that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is symptomatic of this fact. The spiritual and educational gains of this trip is beyond my pen adequately to describe. Sufficient to say, however, that through the existence of the Brotherhood the Negro in America in particular and the workers generally, are spiritually richer for our being.

*The Messenger*, 8 (June, 1926): 173-74.

#### 14. TOWARD THE HOME STRETCH

By Frank R. Crosswaith  
*Special Organizer*

With the eyes of the Nation turned upon it, and the hearts of a race beating with mingled hope and prayer for its victory, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters turns its head, figuratively speaking, toward the home stretch. Seldom, if ever before, has a group of workers in their struggle to rid themselves of some of the cobwebs of industrial oligarchy succeeded in attracting as much attention and gained such widespread sympathy as in the case of the 12,000 Negroes employed as Porters and Maids by the Pullman Company. Students of labor history, experienced labor leaders, aged preachers and politicians all have marvelled at the picturesque figure cast upon the American industrial stage by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, for, the Brotherhood's success has shattered many of the beliefs and left over ideas about the Negro worker and his capacity to function in the industrial realm; it has also given fresh courage to our friends who believe in the humanhood of the Negro race.

In the success of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters there lies a lesson of deep import both to organized labor and organized capital. To the former it sounds the advanced note of the arrival of the Negro worker into the ranks of the organized labor movement to play its part in tearing down the color bar which has so long divided labor. To the latter, it is a warning that the end of the day is at hand when the unorganized Negro worker can be so handily used by capital in its struggle with labor. In the world of thinking men and women, the above truths are clearly recognized. The National Magazine, in its issue of June 9th carried an editorial on "The Pullman Porter" in which appears this significant paragraph: "These men who punch our pillows and shine our shoes and stow our bags under the seat in their black hands no little responsibility for the industrial future of their race."

Already unorganized Negro workers in almost every industry are beginning to look with inquiring eyes to the Brotherhood for council and leadership in their endeavor to organize and equip themselves the better to grapple with the problem of making a living. That Negro workers have been systematically kept out of the labor movement will not be denied by any honest and fairminded person familiar with the story of American labor. The story is a long and gruesome one tempered only with a few saving instances which need not be mentioned here. It is quite apropos to say, however--and it is now generally admitted--that labor, by bending before the color line did much to weaken itself in its struggle with capital and to justify the antagonism evince up to but recently by Negro workers toward the cause of labor. On the other hand such tragedies as East St. Louis, Chicago, Cartharet, etc., tell more eloquently than words can how organized capital has profited from the rift made by color prejudices in the ranks of labor.

With the onward sweep of our industrial developments and their attendant social evils and advantages it was inevitable that the Negro worker would be drawn more fully into the conflict between our industrial masters and the working class. That he would enter the struggle so defiantly enthusiastic, was not expected by even those who had given some serious thought to the perplexing

questions of labor and capital. But, contrary to calculations he not only proudly entered the list, but with lightning rapidity broke down some of the traditions falsely attributed to his race, and established a new record in the history of workers organizing in the United States; he also brings with him those admirable attributes for which the race is noted. The spiritual zest and fervor carefully cultivated during the days of slavery; his courage, so often attested to by all who know the military and pioneer history of the United States, his devotion and faithfulness to a cause in which he believes, and above all, his soul sweetening music which has given America a place high in the musical world. All of these he brings to the organized workers of the United States, as can be observed at the meetings of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

When one recalls some of the stories that have gone the rounds of this country and the world anent the eternal, inescapable and fundamental difference between the Negro and white man, it is not such a hard matter to understand the general interest and surprise which the spectacular growth and expansion of the Brotherhood has caused. To have expected that 12,000 Negroes would continue to accept unquestioningly a condition of employment which denied them a living wage, which subjected them to inhumanly long hours of work and which demanded of them the submersion of their manhood by making public beggars of them, is to evince a sort of juvenile optimism that is deserving of the utmost pity.

In spite of the deplorable conditions attendant upon the porter's employment, however, it might safely be said that the rapid progress and success of the Brotherhood is due to the resourcefulness and courage of the General Organizer. This young Negro, with a social vision, brought to the Pullman Porters' movement a rich experience and thorough training in labor problems, economics, sociology, history, etc. It can be stated that seldom has a leader of any group assumed active leadership so thoroughly prepared as is the case with A. Philip Randolph. For over ten years this pioneer Negro labor leader struggled against the organized ignorance of his group and the wide-spread prejudice of the whites in an effort to bring the liberating message of industrial freedom to Negro workers. We quite vividly recall the apathy, the open and subtle hostility and fear which greeted him and his colleagues in the early morn of their crusading days.

Now, however, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is an established fact, its roots are sunk deep in the life of the American people. As the days roll into weeks and months, and the months into years, its influence will spread wider and deeper until all the workers of the Nation realize that the fate of the whole working class is inextricably bound up with that of every section of the working class. When this truth is accepted by the tortured toilers of the land, it will mean the dawning of a new day, and a realization of the prophetic advice, uttered by one of the world's great benefactors: "*Workers of the World Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to gain*"; and, in that day, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters will sink its identity into a bigger and nobler Brotherhood.

*The Messenger*, 8 (July, 1926): 196.

## 15. OUR NEXT STEP

By A. Philip Randolph, *General Organizer*

*Dear Brethren and Fellow Workers, Greetings:*

We have reached another mile post in our onward steady march toward our goal. We are ready for action and we are in action for the achievement of our objectives, namely, a living wage, 240 hours or less in regular assignment, better working conditions, and the recognition of our movement as the instrument lawfully to settle disputes on wages and working conditions between the Pullman Porters and Maids and the Pullman Company. Through eight or more months of intensive struggle, we have built up a powerful organization which has won the

recognition and admiration of friend and foe. Throughout our steady, progressive and dramatic march forward, some have doubted, many feared, others denied that our goal could be realized. But withal, the iron-battalions of the Brotherhood have never faltered. The question of whether we could organize or not has been definitely and unequivocally answered. We have done the deed in manlike fashion; we have scaled apparently insurmountable heights of obstacles and opposition, subdued and routed relentless and bitter enemies. Confronted by the most formidable forces ever arrayed against a movement, we have ploughed our way on through to victory after victory to the deafening accalim of an aroused and enlightened public.

Doubtless we have made some mistakes, all movements do. That was inevitable in a great forward, soul stirring effort. But they have not been grievous. Our policies have been and are sound. They are based upon the most rigid experience and knowledge of the labor movement. Had they not been sound, the organization would have blown up long since. Moreover, besides being structurally and organically correct, our heart, our purpose, our vision has been and is right. But, brethren, our achievement, though marvelous, creditable, stupendous and thrilling, is just our beginning. Despite the fact responsible, seasoned, hard-boiled and experienced labor leaders readily admit that our work of organization in the last eight or more months overshadows the results of a large number of unions that have been in existence eight or more years, we must not be lulled into a false sense of security, of inactivity and contentment. Yes, they consider our work veritably phenomenal. But let us not become drunk with the red wine of our achievements, however challenging they may be to the opposition. Life is one continuous struggle. Our struggle is not for a week or a month or a year, but for all time. We are building for generations of black children unborn. That we may build for the future securely, we have sought with deliberation, patience, labor, study and sacrifice, to lay our foundation upon the rock of truth and justice, in order that we may weather the fierce storms of adversity. This has required and will continue to require of every Brotherhood man that he realize that the things that are permanent, enduring and imperishable are not of mushroom growth, but that an enduring and stable structure must rest upon a sure and solid foundation which is the work of time, intelligence and devotion. Without a recognition of this fact nothing of substantial value can be achieved. The landmarks of progress are the results of ceaseless, continuous and prolonged struggle. The powerful railroad organizations are over a half century old, and they are still working to increase their power, to educate their members, to increase their wages and improve their working conditions.

Thus, it is obvious to any one that the accomplishments of the Brotherhood in the last eight or more months are nothing short of a miracle.

Now, in order that our next step may be correctly placed and timed, we have sought the advice and guidance of Mr. Donald Richberg.

#### Donald R. Richberg and the Brotherhood

It is a matter of common knowledge that Mr. Richberg knows more about the Watson-Parker Bill, which enacted the Railway Labor Act, under which the Mediation Board will be set up and function, than any living man in America, since he, together with Mr. Thom, who represented the Association of Railway Executives, wrote it. He represented the twenty standard railroad unions.

In reference to our case and situation, it is Mr. Richberg's opinion that the Brotherhood should permit one of the standard railroad unions of great power and means to go before the Mediation Board first and fully test and employ the entire machinery of the new Act before we present our case to the Board. His reason is based upon the fact that a standard railroad labor organization is more prepared to secure favorable precedents and interpretations of principles for organized railway employees, who seek to employ the method of collective bargaining as against the company union, sugar-coated the employee representation plan, than the Brotherhood would be or the Pullman conductor's organization, or any of the smaller unions. He feels that our case will be greatly and materially strengthened, if, when we go before the Board, we are able to point to precedents and interpretations on wages and working conditions, which have already been made by the Board, under the new law, that are, in principle, similar to our own case. The logic of this reasoning is seen by the fact that if a given precedent or interpretation applies in one case it must, ipso facto,

apply in another case which is analogous. In his opinion, it is more to our advantage to profit from the pioneer work and experience before the Board of a powerful standard railroad organization, which will mobilize all of its forces in getting the Board to take the right position on organized labor, than for the Brotherhood to have the responsibility and burden of doing that job, which would be necessary were we to be the first to take our case to the Board. The only question involved, Brethren and Fellow Workers, is the question of the advantage, of benefit, of favorable result. If it were more advantageous for the Brotherhood and sound and proper that we should do so. But if a greater advantage is to be secured by permitting some other union to precede us, it is the part of wisdom for us to adopt the latter course of action. There is no better or abler person in America from whom we can find out which course of action is the proper one to pursue than Donald R. Richberg. He is an expert in Railroad Labor Law, in Trade Union policy and strategy.

Besides, be it remembered, brethren, that Frank P. Walsh, celebrated labor lawyer and Donald R. Richberg are associated together in working on and presenting our case. Therefore, let every Brotherhood man increase his zeal, interest, devotion and enthusiasm for the building up of our great movement. Our supreme test is at hand. We cannot and must not hesitate, procrastinate, or equivocate. In these times, events are moving swiftly. In the very near future, the Board will be making interpretations and setting down precedents which we must be able to avail ourselves of, readily, promptly and effectively. Fortunately we have made a thorough and assuring technical preparation. We have mobilized the very best talent as economists and lawyers available in the country.

#### Present Plan of Action

Mr. Richberg, Mr. Frank P. Walsh and your humble servant are now busy working out plans, policies and methods of procedure for handling the Brotherhood's case. In an extended conference of several hours, Mr. Richberg and myself went into practically every phase of our problem, detailedly. It is quite evident that he is deeply sympathetic with our cause and concerned that we win our demands, build up and maintain a powerful and constructive organization.

*The Messenger*, 8 (July, 1926): 217, 218, 221.

#### 16. PULLMAN PORTERS VOTING SOLIDLY FOR BROTHERHOOD; COMPANY UNION LOSING

A. Philip Randolph, general organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, has issued the following statement:

"As a result of the indorsement coming from such organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Knights of Pythias, the National Federation of Colored Women, the National Urban League and other useful race institutions, the spirit of the men in the brotherhood is at its highest point in the organization's history."

"The results of one week of balloting among the men prior to our appearance before the mediation board indicate that the great majority of Pullman porters and maids have repudiated the company union plan of the Pullman company and are solidly for the brotherhood."

*The New Leader*, August 21, 1926.

## 17. VOICE OF NEGRO LABOR

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters  
Brings Trade Unionism's Message

By Frank R. Crosswaith

To the great chorus of proletarian voices is added the now-awakened black workers of the United States in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In 1894 that Grand Old Man of Labor, Eugene V. Debs, was sent to Woodstock jail because of his efforts to weld all the railroad workers, including Negro porters into the American Railway Union. The story of this brilliant early effort of American labor is still rich and fascinating reading, and will become even more so with the passing of years. One fact that will make the episode always of first rate interest to students of labor is that in 1925 the same group of workers whose absence from the ranks of the A.R.U. contributed largely to its failure, has now become organized and among those most active in this accomplishment are two Negro comrades of Debs.<sup>50</sup>

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was launched upon the charted but troubled sea of trade unionism on the night of August 25, 1925, when a handful of Pullman porters assembled in the lower meeting hall of the Negro Elks of New York City. The message of trade unionism and the class struggle was explained to them by A. Philip Randolph, brilliant editor of the *Messenger Magazine*, George S. Schuyler, Roy Lancaster, the writer, and others.

It was plain to those who knew the history of labor in the United States as well as the relationship of the Negro to the white population of the country, that there was being born a movement which would test to the fullest degree the capacity of the American Negro to grasp the significance of trade unionism, and which would establish the fact that the Negro masses had at last entered upon the industrial battlefield to endure experiences that other workers have encountered. It was also plain that in addition to the experiences common to all workers attempting to increase their wages, thereby reducing profits, through organization, these workers had to grapple with the peculiar psychology of a race who for 250 years were held in servitude, made to believe that they were created to be only "hewers of wood and drawers of water," a belief so deep-rooted as to make many Negro leaders, both religious and secular the ardent and eloquent defenders of entrenched wealth.

Here, indeed, is a sociological paradox which social scientists some day may be able more fully to explain. Here, too, is a testimonial to the astuteness and cleverness of those who rule America; a race occupying the lowest rung of the social, political and economic ladder staunchly defending those who have decreed to them that position, and who, because of their control of the press, the school, and the pulpit, are mainly responsible for the social ills suffered by that race; a race of workers hostile to the claims of labor, indifferent to the wrongs suffered by labor, and ever ready to be used on the side of entrenched power and against all those who challenged the power of the master class.

In brooding over this working class tragedy, the writer is not unmindful of the indifference, the open and concealed hostility and apathy of a large--alas! too large--section of white labor. That the birth of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters marked the beginning of the end of such a serious situation is admitted by friend and foe alike.

Facing unparalleled obstacles, lacking in the main actual experiences in trade union technique and tactics, these Negro workers have conducted a campaign of education, agitation and organization that has added new lustre to labor's cause and new laurels to their race.

In one year of activity they have chalked up a new record. Theirs is the record of being the first large group of workers to defeat a Company Union in battle. This fact was vividly brought out when on the afternoon of August 26, the annual "Field Day" of the Company Union took place. On their way to the "field" a parade was staged through the streets of Negro Harlem and passed the Headquarters of the Brotherhood. At the head of the parade rode the local white Pullman officials; behind them was a band of musicians followed by porters who by actual count numbered six and only one of whom can be truly classified as a porter. Prior to the organization of the Brotherhood, the Field Day of the

porters was an eagerly awaited and well patronized social event in the life of the porter in particular and the race in general. Huge throngs usually attended this affair. It was with this past experience that the parade was recommended. For, argued those who are supposed "to know," when we can march through the streets of Harlem with several thousand porters and their families, it will prove to all and sundry that the porters are with us and against the agitators. The usual inducements of free (?) ice cream, cake, punch, dancing, etc., were offered, but the men for once very graciously declined the company's Grecian gift.

In contrast to this, the Brotherhood staged an anniversary rally that very night in the spacious and inviting auditorium of St. Luke's Hall. The rally was staged as a test of the relative strength of the Company Union and the Brotherhood. The hall was crowded to overflowing, the enthusiasm of the men was at the highest point. It was undoubtedly the largest group of Negro workers ever gathered under one roof to listen to an economic program.

On this Labor Day the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters salute the workers of every race in every land. It brings the message of class solidarity to the workers of the United States in every shop, in every mill, in every mine, on every railroad. It says to them that henceforth in the struggle of labor everywhere to rid the world of exploitation, war, chauvinism, prejudice, and poverty, they, the organized representatives of the soul-racked victims of a soulless social system, are determined that no longer must labor be divided on the basis of color, race, religion, or nationality, thereby playing into the hands of the master class, but that Labor must stand solidly united in recognition of its common interest and common destiny.

*The New Leader*, September 4, 1926.

#### 18. ANSWER WALL STREET FICTION ABOUT PULLMAN PORTERS' WAGES; COMPANY PROFITS FROM TIPS

By Esther Lowell

NEW YORK--Pullman porters organized in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters are using the occasion of their union's first anniversary to answer Pullman Co. propaganda printed as a news article in the Wall Street Journal. One big point made in the article is that the minimum wage of porters has increased 163 per cent in the last 13 years. "Quite true," agree the porters, "but look where it all started--\$27.50 in 1913! Is the \$72.50 a month a living wage now? We are seeking a minimum of at least \$150 monthly to meet the high cost of living."

The Pullman Co. saves \$139.30 on every 15-years-in-service porter it pays \$90.70 a month, declare the porters. The porter paid this rate is "in charge" --doing the conductor's work in addition to his own on the Pullman car. If the company paid a conductor for the work, it would spend \$150 for the conductor plus \$80 for the porter, a total of \$220.

#### Few Private Cars

Furthermore, the company cannot point to a single porter regularly employed in charge of a private car and therefore earning the maximum rate of \$104 a month, \$1,248 a year mentioned in the Wall Street Journal. The porter is paid at the maximum rate when he goes out in charge of the private car, but he is seldom out in that capacity over a month or two at a time, and never as much as a year steadily. Between such choice runs he lapses back to his old rate.

The Pullman Co. is credited with paying porters on committee and company work extra sums on the basis of their presumed tips equaling \$75 a month. The porters say that they are actually paid only for such days on which the committee work occurs, not for the total days lost. Roy Lancaster, secretary-treasurer of the brotherhood says that he used to miss five days when called off his New York-Chicago run for company union work. He received pay only for

the two days on which the committee met.

#### Few Tips

Tips are about the \$55 a month first estimated in the Wall Street Journal, not the the \$75 later implied as correct, according to Labor Bureau Inc. findings from the the porters' own replies to a questionnaire. Sylvia Kopald of the bureau is working out statistics for the brotherhood to present with its case--to the Pullman Co. if a conference is granted after the national referendum on company union or brotherhood--to the rail mediation board otherwise.

Only a third of the passengers in a parlor car of 31 seats will tip, porters say, and most give only a dime. In sleeping cars the percentage tipping is a little higher but the maximum amount given is usually a quarter. When a man and wife and children travel together, the man is likely to give the porter only a quarter for the whole family, even tho several berths are occupied. When berths are not all full, the porter is the loser. He is never sure of this much needed extra income from tips.

#### Tipping the Boss

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters wants to see the porters and maids paid sufficiently by the Pullman Co., so that they will not have to depend upon tips for their living. The tip is really tipping the company, the porters say, for not paying its workers decent wages. The company does not recognize tips as a part of earnings in apportioning pensions to old employees. The average pension given is only \$18 a month.

Porters have to pay for their own food enroute, paying half the high dining car prices charged to passengers, which is still an expensive rate for such poorly paid workers. Only a third of the porters, according to the Wall Street Journal figures, get free uniforms because of 10 years or more service. The majority of porters have this additional expense each year. As for owning their own homes and autos, the brotherhood officials laugh at the idea and wonder where the Wall Street Journal found its figures. Porters in small towns may possibly own little shacks they call homes, but the bulk of the porters are urban dwellers and certainly do not own either residences or autos.

#### Don't Own Company

The financial paper makes a point of the porters' ownership of Pullman Co. stock. Each porter is permitted to buy only one share and less than a tenth have taken the offer. The Pullman Porters' Benefit Assn., given with the company union, was denied the right of investing \$200,000 of its \$250,000 funds taken from the porters in stock.

*Daily Worker*, September 13, 1926.

### 19. THE BROTHERHOOD'S ANNIVERSARY

By A. Philip Randolph

Dear Brethren and Fellow-workers, Greetings:

One year ago this month we were born. It was August 25th, in New York. The occasion was a monster mass meeting in the Elks Hall. This had been preceded by a secret conclave at the home of Brother Des Verney with himself, Brothers Lancaster and Totten and the writer. At that mass meeting, perhaps, the most unique and significant movement among Negroes was projected. It began and has steadily moved forward within the veil of secrecy. This was essential to avoid the victimization of the men. The wisdom of this method has been tested through a period which has tried men's souls.

## Why Did We Begin?

Is the question which has rung down the changes. Have we not accepted, too often in abject resignation, unmerited scorn reproach and persecution for over one thousand years? Have we not drunk in America, a land made beautiful, prosperous and powerful, by our own sweat and blood, tears and toil, the bitter dregs of privation and want, hate and hell? Have we not, as virtual peons of Pullman property, built up mountains of gold and goodwill, for over a half century, without a murmur, on starvation wages, in fact, on practically no wages at all? Have we not listened to the honeyed words, the siren call of our pretended white friends and black leaders who counselled satisfaction and contentment: "to let well enough alone," to accept pity for pay; to wait for ours in the sweet by and bye instead of fighting for justice in the here, now and nigh? Have we not been easily flattered, quickly deceived, and systematically exploited? Have we not ever appeared as children of laughter and levity, joy and jokes, innocence and ignorance? We sang in sorrow, danced in darkness and worked in worry.

Who then, Brethren, could take us seriously? The tragedy of our lives could not be sensed by the outer world of white men.

What though, ask the white men of power, black children wail for bread they never eat; black women weep for raiment they never wear; and black men toil to the tune of torture? Is it not written in holy writ: "Slaves, obey thy master?" Have they not been the slaves of men down the centuries! They have accepted insolence in silence, contempt with contentment, derision in docility. Have they not been the disinherited and dishonored of the sons of men? Then how can the world reverse its reason on right and wrong in relation to a race of blacks? Thus spake the age-old masters of slaves. Nor have they changed in their thinking today, nor will they change, Brethren, until we change them. This then is why the Brotherhood was born. We are in quest for the holy grail of economic freedom. Yes, and we shall find it. But we must destroy the engines of industrial slavery ere we breathe the air of free men.

## Smashing the Employee Plan

Realizing that the Employee Representation Plan stood athwart our path to freedom, we resolutely assailed it without let or hindrance or equivocation. All of the resources of the Pullman Company have been thrown in the balance against us. Still we are steadily smashing it, retiring it to oblivion. Every subterfuge has been resorted to with a view to fortifying a decadent, decrepit, and deceptive plan for settling workers' grievances. The operation of the Plan has securely established its own failure, its own futility as an instrument for achieving economic justice for the porters and maids. So thoroughly has the Plan been discredited that the Company, in order to give it a new lease of life, has placed a porter on the Board of Industrial Relations, in order that it might appear that the porters and maids have a voice on every committee of the Plan. One, Mr. George Shannon, has been chosen to represent the porters. Regardless of his qualities or virtues, he is absolutely helpless to benefit the porters. *He is like a lamb in a cage of lions.* He is being used as flypaper to ensnare the porters. The new scheme is merely calculated to deceive the porters into believing that the Plan will work, that the Brotherhood is unnecessary. But the Pullman Company cannot fool the Pullman porters all of the time. Porters, like conductors, were bound to wake up. Sheer necessity forced it. Oppression, in the nature of things, contains the seeds of its own abolition. No institution, or system, or doctrine founded upon the tyranny of body or mind, can stand. The Plan represents autocracy. It suppresses freedom. It stifles initiative. It suffocates thought. Its rules merely regulate injustice and intrench industrial serfdom. It was built to discourage organization of, by and for the porters and maids. It cannot any more serve the interests of the porters than can a sewing machine grind corn.

The fact that every official of the Plan must be an employee of the Company, gives the Company the power to discharge any man who shows a spirit to fight in the interest of the men. The whole fight of the Company against the Brotherhood is based upon the fact that it doesn't control the officials of the Union. Such is the reason for the trade union movement everywhere. It is seeking to break the irresponsible domination of the boss over the workers.



In one year then, Brethren, we have thoroughly broken the power of the Plan. It is one of our most signal victories. The Company may be reluctant to admit it, but history will reveal it.

#### Other Opposition

Upon discovering that the Plan could not withstand the mortal blows the Brotherhood was dealing it, the Company proceeded to mobilize forces within the race to oppose the Union. The powerful Negro papers of the West went over completely to the Pullman Company and arrayed themselves against us. Pullman gold was being lavishly dispensed among Negro editors. Few had the stamina to resist the pressure. Happily, all of the Negro editors did not surrender to Pullman power. The Eastern papers very largely maintained their freedom, and so have some of the Western ones.

But, undaunted and undismayed, we fought on and won the respect and admiration of friend and foe.

Conferences of some of our leading Negroes were adroitly plotted, planned and juggled to glorify the so-called Pullman friendship for the race. Corrupt and wicked Negro politicians and preachers were subsidized to proclaim the blessings of the so-called monopoly which porters and maids enjoy, a monopoly which does not yield a living wage or civilized hours and conditions of work. It was boldly asserted that no other race enjoys such a monopoly as though there was any other race except the white serving as conductors on Pullman cars or railroad trains. Are not these jobs monopolized by the white race?

Even the much oppressed Filipino was belabored into some of the club cars in order to frighten the porters away from the Brotherhood. But to no avail.

We were in dead earnest this time. The Company saw it. We would not surrender, we would not equivocate, we would not retreat a single step, and we resolved that we would be heard in the great forum of public opinion, and we were heard.

#### Sixteen Cents More Per Day

But, brethren, the Pullman Company is resourceful and inventive. It has fertile brains. Seeing the tide of organization steadily rising, it made its supreme bid to stem the tide by calling a wage conference under the Plan and distributed a few crumbs from its big banquet table of some seventeen millions net profits for 1925, in the form of an eight per cent increase or sixteen cents a day. And to the utter amazement and dismay of the Company, it only stimulated the men to organize more strongly, since it was apparent to them that the increase was the direct result of the Brotherhood. Thus the Brotherhood is already paying the porters over 300 per cent on every dollar they have invested in it, granting that they have paid their joining fee of five dollars and twelve dollars dues, for the year. In a bank, at the current rate of interest, they would only have earned six per cent, or \$1.02 on \$17, a year's interest, whereas the Brotherhood has put \$64.80 in the pockets of the porters for \$17. Not a bad record, this. And the porters are getting this increase of \$64.80 every year, but only pay \$12 dues. Obviously, the Brotherhood has paid big dividends.

But this is only the beginning, my brethren.

#### The Referendum

is on, and at its conclusion, a conference will be sought with the Company. Should we fail to secure same, we shall seek the services of the Mediation Board.

We have come a long way to reach this point. And we are ready, willing and prepared to fight through the years to attain our goal, economic security and freedom.

Thus, brethren, let our anniversary be an occasion of joy. It is the race's first serious and significant knock at the door of economic justice.

Let us look forward with our heads erect and souls undaunted. Ours is a great spiritual victory for the race. To the utter disappointment, consternation and despair of Pullman officials, the Brotherhood has demonstrated

to the world that it is beyond the reach of corruption. Be assured, my brethren, that the Pullman Company may have money enough to purchase preachers and politicians, papers and prestige, but it has not got *millions* enough to cause me to desert your cause. Every dollar you put in the Brotherhood is systematically handled by an expert accountant. Your money is as secure in the Brotherhood as it is in the Pullman Company. It is being used for no other purpose than your economic emancipation. Your officials are honest, upright and capable.

The great success of your movement is due to the valiant unselfish and efficient labor of Roy Lancaster, General Secretary-Treasurer; W. H. Des Verney, Assistant General Organizer; A. L. Totten, Second Assistant General Organizer; S. E. Grain, Field Organizer; Frank R. Crosswaith, Special Organizer; M. P. Webster, Organizer, Chicago Division; George A. Price, Secretary-Treasurer, Chicago Division, and Brother Berry; George S. Grant, Secretary-Treasurer of Los Angeles; Dad Moore and D. J. Jones of Oakland; Clarence E. Ivey of Portland; Burgess of Salt Lake City; Benjamin of Boston; Rev. Prince of Denver, and a host of heroic, self-sacrificing souls whom circumstances prevent naming at this hour. The men have ascended to the highest heights of human struggle--loyalty to a great cause. They have been weighed in the balance and *not* found wanting.

"Tempt them with bribes, you tempt in vain;  
Try them with fire, you'll find them true."

Yours, brethren, has been a marvelous demonstration of devotion, zeal, faith, and action.

To deter such souls from their purpose or vanquish them in combat is as impossible as to stop the rush of the ocean when the spirit of the storm rides upon its mountain billows. You are hourly increasing in number and strength and going on from conquering to conquer.

White America has always reasoned that no Negroes had the moral stamina to resist the influence of money. Your Pullman officials thought that in order to halt this movement it was only a question of sending out a few thousand dollars to buy up your officials. But Pullman officials and white America have been rudely awakened to a realization that a New Negro has come upon the scene who places *manhood above money, principles above price, devotion to duty to his race and a great human cause beyond the reach of gold, whether it be in tens of thousands or millions.*

To my mind, brethren, this is our greatest spiritual landmark. It has won the respect of the employer, worker, educator, politician and preacher alike. You have shown that it is not true that every Negro has his price to sell out the race. Yes, your movement is incorruptible by gold and undaunted by power. *I would rather go in rags, live in a hovel, drink water and eat the crust of bread, and go down to the voiceless silence of the dreamless dust before I would betray your trust for the riches of this world.*

And, brethren, we cannot fail if we remain united. For the cause of justice there is:

"A voice on every wave,  
A sound on every sea!  
The watchword of the brave,  
The anthem of the free!  
Where'er a wind is rushing,  
Where'er a stream is gushing,  
The swelling sounds are heard,  
Of man to freeman calling,  
Of broken fetters falling--  
And like the carol of a cageless bird,  
The bursting shout of freedom's rallying word!"

Why should we not rejoice in our triumph? Is not the star of hope beginning to illumine our path to power. Do you not see the pitiless storm which has so long been pouring its rage upon you breaking away, and a glorious bow of promise spanning the sky--a token that to the end of time, if we are resolute, the billows of prejudice and oppression shall no longer cover the earth to the destruction of our race, but seed time and harvest shall never fail and the laborer shall eat the fruit of his hand and brain.

Then let us be tolerant. Let us forgive our enemies, though remain ever vigilant and alert. Let us as workers be ever mindful of our duties, obligations and responsibilities to the Pullman Company and to the public. A high standard of service depends upon us and we must give it. No Brotherhood man should ever shirk his duty or violate the rules of the Company. The purpose of the Brotherhood is not to shield dishonesty, insobriety, indolence, but to foster industry, a high sense of responsibility, intelligent initiative, courtesy and devotion to principles of justice, righteousness, fair-play, freedom, self-reliance, loyalty to truth and service to mankind.

But what have we done? We have achieved nothing short of a miracle through solidarity.

#### Achievements of the Brotherhood

1. It forced the Company to call a wage conference last February under the Employee Representation Plan and grant the porters and maids an eight per cent increase, thereby raising the pay from \$67.50 per month to \$72.90.

2. It forced the Company to revise the Time Sheet with a view to removing basis for criticism on same.

3. It has forced the local officials to become quite lavish with courtesies and attention.

4. It has carried the message of labor unionism to over half a million black and white workers from August 25, 1925, to August 1, 1926. Over 500 meetings have been conducted from origin of movement up to day. The meetings have ranged from 100 to 2,500 or more. Thousands of Negroes addressed had never heard a talk of organized labor before. Many of the Negro preachers did not know what it was all about, except that some "black reds" were coming to town to urge insurrection among Negroes. That was the propaganda of the Company. It is estimated that there were over 60,000 persons at the opening of the Sesqui-Centennial at which the General Organizer spoke May 31st. He stressed the cause of black labor. Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, and Frank B. Kellogg, Secretary of State, the other speakers, stressed the prosperity of the country.<sup>51</sup>

5. The case of the Pullman porters in particular and the Negro workers in general has been presented to central labor bodies in various cities visited as well as to individual trade unions. A large number of white workers said that they had never seen a Negro before advocating the organization of Negro workers.

6. The Brotherhood has secured entrance into a number of Negro churches.

7. The case of the Pullman porters and the Negro workers has been presented in addresses to Reed College in Portland, Oregon; a body of students of the University of Denver, and a group of industrial Y.W.C.A. girls; University of California; University of Southern California; Chicago University; University of Minnesota; the fraternity of law students of Howard University; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Convention, together with a large number of liberal and labor forums throughout the country; also to a number of Negro business clubs; National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the Shriners and Knight Templars in convention.

8. The Brotherhood has secured the endorsement of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in convention assembled; the leaders of the National Urban League; the Chicago State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs; the Thirty-seventh Annual Session of the Grand Lodge of the Knights of Pythias of New York; the Empire State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs; the Brotherhood of Federal Post Office Employees; National Young People's Baptist Union; the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers; the National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs.

9. During eleven months of organization and agitation, over three million five hundred thousand pieces of propaganda literature have been circulated.

10. Over 75,000 miles of territory have been covered by the organizers.

11. The Brotherhood has brought to the porters for their education such leaders of thought as James Weldon Johnson, Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P.; John Fitzpatrick, President, Chicago Federation of Labor; ex-Governor Sweet of Colorado; Norman Thomas, Director, League for Industrial Democracy; Mary Mc Dowell, Head of the Department of Charities of Chicago; H. E. Wills, Assistant Grand Chief, Locomotive Engineers; Mr. Lovell, Vice-President, Locomotive

Firemen; Mr. Clark, Vice-President, Train Conductors; C. H. Brown, General Chairman, Adjustment Board of Railway Clerks and Express Handlers; Mr. Eagan, Special Representative of William Green, President of the A.F. of L.; William Pickens, R. W. Bagnall, Walter White of the N.A.A.C.P.; Eugene Kinckle Jones, Executive Secretary of the National Urban League; James Oneal, Morris Hillquit, Chandler Owen, C. Francis Stradford, lawyer, Abraham Lefkowitz, Prof. Bowman of Columbia University; Joseph Schlossberg, Secretary-Treasurer, Amalgamated Clothing Workers; Gertrude E. MacDougald, Assistant Principal, Public School 89; August Classens, ex-Assemblyman, Algernon Lee of the Rand School of Social Science; Congressmen Emanuel Celler and LaGuardia, Arthur Garfield Hayes, Rev. A. C. Powell of the Abyssinnia Church, New York City, Thomas J. Curtis, First Vice-President, State Federation of Labor of the A.F. of L.; Charles W. Ervin, Editor of the *Advance*, organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union; Samuel Beardsley, of Jewelry Workers, Philip Zausner, of Painters and Paper Hangers; Harry Laidler, Benjamin Stolberg, McAllister Coleman of Federated Press, Robert L. Dunn, Gurley Flynn.

In all of the districts where the Brotherhood has set up local organizing committees, speakers from the American Federation of Labor have been secured to address the porters from time to time. It has developed a higher sense of race pride and responsibility among Pullman porters and maids.

13. Ladies' Auxiliaries to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters have been established in New York, Chicago, Washington, Boston, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Oakland and Los Angeles, Calif., Denver, Omaha, and Salt Lake City. The auxiliaries are active propaganda nuclei for the Brotherhood.

Such is our achievement, Brethren. Let us renew our courage and faith, and rededicate our hearts and minds and hands to the unfinished task and high mission of Negro emancipation. Forward to victory.

Your faithful servant,

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH, General Organizer.

*The Messenger*, 8 (September, 1926): 263-65.

## 20. PORTERS DITCH COMPANY UNION

### Pullman Company's Czars Forced to Retreat from Attempt to Force Voting

In a vigorous protest against the action of the Pullman Company in attempting to force porters to vote in its company union elections, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters definitely repudiated the "Employee Representation Plan" as representative of the porters at a regular meeting.

Telegrams from every section of the country were read telling the story of porters' refusal to vote in the "Plan." "The spirit of fear is broken," declared A. Philip Randolph, leader of the Brotherhood.

Two Pullman Company officials, czars in their districts, have been forced to back down in their campaigns to intimidate porters into voting in the Employee Representation Plan, according to reports received in the National Headquarters of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

Superintendent Mitchell of the Pennsylvania district and Superintendent Burr of the St. Louis district, noted for browbeating and threatening porters who have refused to vote in the company union elections, have been forced to change their tactics by the militant campaign of the Brotherhood, exposing their Simon Legree methods.

At the beginning of the elections now in progress many porters were sent to the offices of Superintendent Mitchell with a notice: "See Mitchell in regard to refusing to vote." The Brotherhood is in possession of several of these notices. Superintendent Mitchell questioned these men, and by innuendo and direct suggestion threatened them with company reprisals. It was "on the carpet" for any porter who stood on his rights of manhood and refused to cast a vote in the fake company union.

When this situation was reported to the Brotherhood its leaders began a

militant attack upon the czar of the Penn Terminal, showing up his autocratic, irresponsible attitude toward the men in his employ. The result has been a precipitate about face on the part of Superintendent Mitchell. The day after the "Mitchell Must Go" campaign was announced he declined to see porters sent from the yards for not voting. As the Brotherhood attacks continued, he entirely reversed the company policy of forcing men to vote by holding back their pay checks, and now he heard to declare, "Any man has a right to refuse to vote."

The same victory was won over Superintendent Burr in St. Louis, Mo., whose high-handed injustices to the men in the service had long been a grievance in that district.

The Pullman Company has made the forcing of the vote a definite policy both in the Employee Representation Plan and in its cousin, the Pullman Porters' Benefit Association. Elections for the latter were held in October and were marked by all varieties of coercion and intimidation. Paychecks were held up and men held off their runs in an attempt to force the men, who were disgusted by an open company steal of the primary, to register a vote.

Only the fighting spirit displayed by the Brotherhood and the power of honest workers banded together for their own protection check many similar abuses in the Plan elections. There is ample proof that check withholding has been practiced in previous elections.

An example of this kind of illegal pressure is in the offices of the Brotherhood in the shape of a notation from the Second Assistant District Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Terminal District to F. R. McGuire, the receiving cashier. It refers to the elections in the Plan on February 22, 1924, when Roy Lancaster, secretary-treasurer of the Brotherhood, was still trying to fight the cause of the porters within the Employee Representation Plan. It is as follows: "The following P. T. (Penn Terminal) porters have not yet voted. In order to secure every possible vote please withhold their paychecks until O.K.'d by the chairman of the Election Committee, R. Lancaster."

Against tactics like these the Brotherhood instituted its successful campaign. "The Company Union Must Go," is its slogan, and it will continue to defend the rights of the men who wish to join an honest labor union that will protect their interests against the Pullman officials, who wish to force them to remain in a powerless, non-representative, company-controlled "plan."

*The New Leader*, November 13, 1936.

## 21. THE PORTER ASSERTS HIS MANHOOD

*How a trade union brings self-respect and improved conditions to America's Pullman Porters heralds a new day in race relations*

*By Frank R. Crosswaith, Special Organizer,  
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*

The "Golden Rule" is still the unrealized dream of mankind, and bids fair, it seems, to remain so for generations yet to come. Nevertheless it is a dream that will continue to attract the devotion and enlist the support of men and women of vision in every race and clime all down the slopes of time until it becomes a reality.

The history of the human race shows that religious freedom was at one time the all-absorbing question confronting early man. The right to worship God after the desire of one's own heart was won at a tremendous cost in blood and misery. The finest flower of the pioneer Christians was sacrificed to establish this right.

Political liberty next occupied the center of the stage. The so-called "divine right of kings to rule" was challenged by those who believed in the right of the governed to have a voice in their government. Like religious freedom, political liberty was won after much blood had been shed, every race contributing its quota of martyrs to the cause. Today political liberty

is pretty generally recognized. In those countries where kings still rule by divine right their powers have been considerably reduced. They are kings in name only. The real power lies with the people.

#### Industrial Autocracy Bars Social Progress

The question which this generation and perhaps many succeeding ones must answer is that of industrial democracy; the right of men and women who work, whether by hand or by brain, to have a voice in determining the conditions and hours of their work and the reward they shall receive for their labor. Whether we know it or not, whether or not we consciously make any contribution to the answering of this question, the fact remains that around the fortress of industrial autocracy our social progress will mark time until the answer is made. This answer will in the nature of things be in favor of democracy. For we cannot remain politically and religiously free in the midst of industrial despotism. To attempt to do so will sow the dragon's teeth and eventually to reap the harvest in conflict.

#### The Negro's Share in Labor's Struggle

One of the manifestations of our efforts to answer the call of democracy in industry is the trade union movement. The limits of this article will not permit a consideration of the long, tragic story of labor to organize, nor a discussion of labor's aims, its methods and its hopes. Suffice it to say that the Negro by organizing is doing his part in the interest of progress in line with the long history of labor's struggle.

Sixty years ago economic conditions and the educational activities of the Abolitionists brought about the emancipation of the American Negro from chattel slavery and lifted him into a world whose ways he did not understand. Without property or education and with but few friends, he turned naturally to the domains of "personal service." He became the cook, the waiter, the butler.

One of the first corporations to employ him in this capacity was the Pullman Company. For fifty-nine years the Negro porter has been a familiar figure to those who enjoy the use of Pullman cars. Today approximately 12,000 of them are employed as porters and maids. The traveling public came to look upon the porter as the smiling, courteous, efficient, faithful and--as they thought--well-paid and satisfied, sable-skinned servant who, after punching their pillows and shining their shoes, glowingly accepts a quarter in tips. Little did the recipients of his keen and capable service suspect that all was not well with him; that beneath his apparent satisfaction was hidden the growing realization that he had genuine and serious grievances, which like those of his white fellow-workers on the railroads and elsewhere could only be corrected through organization of, for and by the porters.

A detailed account of these grievances is excluded from this article through lack of space. It is enough to say, however, that the porter's wages prior to organization were \$67.50 per month (they have since been raised to \$72.50), and his hours of work more than 400 per month. On certain runs he contributes anywhere from three to six hours of labor without pay. In the language of the service this period of free labor is called "preparatory time"--the time between reporting for duty and the train's departure. For instance the porter running on a train which leaves New York for Washington at 1 a.m., must report at 7 p.m.; his car must be ready to receive passengers at 9 o'clock; but his pay does not begin until the train departs. Porters, unlike most other railroad men, work on a mileage basis and are required to make 11,000 miles per month. They spend about \$70,000 per year for shoe blacking, but are not permitted to charge passengers for shining their shoes.

#### A Union Crusade

On August 25, 1925, the first organization meeting of the Brotherhood was held in New York. It was sparsely attended, but the succeeding meetings kept drawing larger and larger crowds until the organization assumed the dimensions and fervor of a regular crusade. The record shows that in less than fourteen months a comfortable majority of the porters and maids were enrolled

in the union. The organizing record of the black workers stands unequalled in the history of American labor organization. No other union before or since has been able to enlist so large a number of workers in so short a time. This was accomplished in the face of an established tradition that the Negro could not be organized. The Brotherhood is a living refutation of that belief and stands as a monument to inspire Negro workers in all other industries.

In their struggle to organize the porters and maids have set their faces resolutely against the "tipping system" as a method of rewarding them for the many excellent services they render the traveling public. This phase of the campaign has won widespread admiration and interest. It marks the porter's struggle as the most significant effort of the Negro since his emancipation. He has come to understand that a firm and balanced manhood is incompatible with a dependence on public gratuities; that tips carry with them a haunting and horrible sense of insecurity, to say nothing of the lack of dignity. Tips for the Negro as a reward for his labor bring back to the dim corners of his memory years of sorrow and bitterness spent in slavery; and they also tend to keep alive the fog of prejudice and ill-feeling.

#### Women Join Union

There are approximately 500 Negro women in the Pullman service employed as maids. They have responded to the call of organization as readily and as fervently as the porters have and are marching shoulder to shoulder with them.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters indicates a new turn in the relations of the races in the United States and a new chapter in labor's story. Its members realize that though fundamentally a trade union, theirs is also a race movement on which the critical eyes of friend and foe alike will be focused, and that its success will enable the Negro to participate more fully and freely in the struggle for industrial democracy. In this struggle he will contribute not alone his share of courage and faithfulness, but his soul will be enlisted. He will further enrich and ennoble the conflict with his music and his song so carefully cultivated during his unforgotten years of servitude, to the end that the GOLDEN RULE may come a little nearer realization.

After 16 months of organizing the Brotherhood has already qualified for recognition with an enrolled membership embracing a large majority of the porters and maids in the service. When A. Philip Randolph, General Organizer, presented the case of the Brotherhood in the preliminary hearing of the U.S. Mediation Board, a new chapter in Negro thought and action was begun.

*The Locomotive Engineers Journal*, 61 (April, 1927): 260-61.

#### 22. OPEN LETTER TO THE PULLMAN COMPANY

June 4, 1927

Mr. E. F. Cary, President,  
The Pullman Company,  
Pullman Building,  
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:

I am addressing you this letter in order to acquaint you, first hand, with every phase of the development of the Movement to organize the Pullman porters in order that your attitude toward this Movement may rest upon a basis of understanding.

First, why did the Pullman porters organize? I think it is a sound business policy that you frankly face the question and honestly seek an answer. Doubtless, you can recall several previous efforts on the part of the porters to organize, especially during the war. Each time the main question at issue was wages and working conditions. Evidently, the porters felt then that organization would enable them to improve their condition. Then the United States Government, through the Railroad Administration Department, of which

Messrs. McAdoo and Hines were Director Generals, encouraged the organization of railroad employees. With a view to adjusting disputes between carriers and employees with facility and dispatch, the Government set up the Board of Wages and Working Conditions. This Board was replaced by the United States Railroad Labor Board, which was set up under the Transportation Act upon the restoration of railroads to private hands, in 1920.<sup>53</sup>

During this time you organized the Employment Representation Plan for the Pullman porters. It functioned for about six years unchallenged. On August 25, 1925, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was born. It was the outgrowth of long deep-seated grievances which had been partly expressed and partly unexpressed, grievances because of poor working conditions which the Employee Representation Plan failed to remedy. These are not imagined but very real grievances which cannot and ought not to be summarily ignored, either by the Company or the porters. Despite several wage conferences under the Plan, five years after its inauguration, porters received a wage of only \$67.50 a month, thereby being compelled to rely, for a living, on tips, which a scientific survey by the New York Labor Bureau revealed averaged only \$58.15 a month, out of which an average occupational expense of \$33.82 must come. This brought an income of only \$1,154.16 a year, whereas, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics has set \$2,040.75 as the minimum yearly wage upon which an American family can live in health and decency. Coupled with this, the systematic oppression of some of your local officials, the inability of porters to get a fair hearing on charges made against them under your Plan, the failure of porters to get an adequate redress for their grievances, the obvious Company control of the Plan, made organization among the porters, as among your conductors, necessary and inevitable. I am sure I need not tell you that porters would not always be content to work the long hours of 350 or more a month under the 11,000 mileage basis without compensation for overtime.

May I say that the Employee Representation Plan, the Pullman Porters Benefit Association, Field Days, Quartets, Bands, Stock Distribution Plans, Free Insurance, Courtesy and Honor Rolls do not constitute a fundamental, fair or permanent solution of the problem of unrest which the above-named conditions are bound to foster, engender and inculcate. Such, then, is the basic reason for the beginning of the Brotherhood.

#### Who Began It?

In order that your mind might be disabused of any misrepresentation about the origin of the Brotherhood, permit me to assure you, backed up by our records, that the Pullman porters in your employ, began the Movement to organize the porters and maids. In the home of Mr. W. H. Des Verney, a porter, thirty-seven years in your service, the first meeting was called. At that meeting, Mr. Roy Lancaster, seventeen years a porter and A. L. Totten, nine years a porter, both of whom served as officials of the Employee Representation Plan and the Pullman Porters Benefit Association, were present. I was the only person invited there who had never served the Company. But I am certain that you will admit that porters have as much right to secure a person who was never a porter to represent their organization as the stockholders of the Pullman Company have to employ an attorney or statistician, not a stockholder, to represent them.

#### Who Compose It?

And the Brotherhood is composed of Pullman porters. Nor are they all young men. The survey by the Labor Bureau of New York showed that the average service-ages of the members of the Brotherhood are a fraction over nine years. It may be interesting for you to know that all of the organizing committees, which are the local executive and administrative machinery of the Brotherhood, are composed of the oldest and most responsible men in your service, service-ages ranging from ten to forty years.

#### Who Control the Brotherhood?

The control of the Brotherhood is in the hands of the porters who finance it by their monthly dues, and assessments when essential. Contrary



to unfounded charges, none of the leaders of the Union are either Atheists or Communists. Its leaders do not oppose the United States Government or advocate irreligion. The Brotherhood is perfectly willing to permit the Pullman Company or anybody of disinterested, responsible citizens, to institute an investigation to establish the truth or falsity of our claim.

#### Purpose of Brotherhood

The organization is seeking lawfully to secure better wages, improved working conditions for the porters and maids through the approved and accepted method of collective bargaining. This principle is recognized in both state and federal statutes. The new Railway Labor Act, which you supported, as a member of the Association of Railway Executives, provides under the head of General Duties, in Section 2 that "All disputes between a carrier and its employees shall be considered, and, if possible, decided with all expedition in conference between representatives designated and authorized so to confer respectively, by the carriers and by the employees thereof interested in the dispute. Third, Representatives, for the purposes of this Act, shall be designated by the respective parties in such manner as may be provided in their corporate organization or unincorporated association, or by other means of collective action, without interference, influence or coercion exercised by either party over the self-organization or designation of representatives by the other."

The right of self-organization on the part of the employees of carriers is clearly and cogently set forth in the aforementioned Act which of course, I am sure you do not deny, since you were a party to its formulation and enactment.

The fact that you recognize the right of your employees to organize and bargain collectively with you is shown by your jointly setting up of an Adjustment Board with the Pullman conductors under the Act. Thus, I am confident that you would not consciously and deliberately seek to deny the porters a right which you recognize and accord the conductors.

But the purpose of the Brotherhood is not only to secure more wages and better working conditions, it is as sincerely concerned and interested in a high standard of service as you are, for we realize that as the company grows and develops into a bigger, better and more prosperous enterprise, the possibilities of improvement for the porters and maids increase, also.

It is the aim and desire of the Brotherhood, with its every initiative and talent, to increase the productive efficiency of the porters and maids, to develop their esprit de corps, to insist upon and maintain the utmost consistency in constructive and productive discipline. Courtesy, sobriety, industry and honesty are foundation principles of the Brotherhood. Courtesy, we consider, an essential element of the Pullman service, an infraction of which is as grave and inexcusable as a lack of industry or honesty. But servility is not courtesy, nor does it make for efficiency. The public is well aware of this distinction, which, it is my hope, you will recognize and appreciate. Contrary to the viewpoint, in certain quarters, that the discipline of the porters would deteriorate with unionization, it would measurably improve, because of their realization that their improved wage and working conditions were made possible through their organization which is obligated to furnish, and, is responsible for, a high order of discipline among its membership. There is also the additional element of race pride in the success and progress of their own organization which would serve as an incentive to porters putting their best foot forward in service. Under the influence of the Brotherhood discipline would flow from the principle of attraction instead of coercion; of willing, intelligent, initiative, instead of fear and intimidation; of a developing and higher instinct for workmanship and service, instead of a grudging performance of routine duties.

The Brotherhood is much more prepared, spiritually and intellectually, to secure this creative, constructive response and discipline than you can through your Employee Representation Plan, because the former, the Brotherhood, emanates from within, as an expression of the spirit and life and hopes and faith of the porters in themselves, whereas, the latter, the Plan, is imposed upon them from without--which social psychology will show--can hardly make for a higher morale that will reflect itself in a finer quality of service.

It is my wish also that you know that the Brotherhood does not presume to take over the management of the Pullman Company. Ours is not to dictate but to cooperate, with every honorable means in a sympathetic and harmonious spirit for the mutual good and benefit of Company and porter, and the traveling public alike.

It is my sincere belief that the collective experience and intelligence of the porters can be more effectively released, organized and appropriated by the Company, for the benefit of the Company, through an organization of the porters of their own free choice than by any agency, however skillfully wrought, but which is devised by the Company, and expresses chiefly the will of the Company.

I suppose it will be generally conceded by everyone that the porter, who actually handles the Pullman car, knows more about it than anybody else. By the very same token, the porter, who actually handles the passengers, knows more about them, their whims, their inexpressed interests and wants, their emotional reaction, than anybody else. This constant repetition in the handling of cars and the public necessarily builds up in them an experience and intelligence of practicable workable value, which may be employed to great advantage by the Company in the inventing of new and more productive methods for achieving and rendering this highly intangible thing you call service, the chief commodity which you sell. This rich mine of creative common sense of porters and maids will only fully manifest itself under the stimulating hope of reward, in terms of equitable wages, working conditions and the freedom of voluntary organizational activity. This does not mean that the Brotherhood will engender the notion in the minds of the porters that they can do as they please, that they can violate the Pullman Company's rules and commit manifold derelictions with impunity, that the Brotherhood will sanction and protect them in shiftlessness, irresponsibility, dishonesty or insolence. Not at all. On the contrary, the Brotherhood will instill, cultivate and develop a higher sense of responsibility, a finer conception of loyalty to the Company, a deeper interest in the conservation and preservation of Pullman property, and an essential concern in the efficient salesmanship of service, the foundation of Pullman and porters' prosperity, alike.

#### Company Has Right to Require Discipline

Permit me to assure you also that the Brotherhood recognizes that you have the right to require discipline from the porters. Discipline is essential to good service and good service is essential to Pullman development. If the Brotherhood did not insist upon, require and insure the utmost discipline of its members in the interest of A-1 service, it would not deserve to exist. May I hope that you will not construe this as vaulting egotism, but you can easily verify the fact that the Brotherhood can develop in, and exact, a higher form of discipline from the porters and maids than the Employee Representation Plan can, because of their deep faith in the former and their chronic distrust of the latter, a faith born both of a vital race consciousness and pride in self-organization responsibility, and a distrust born of doubt that porters can secure justice through the Employee Representation Plan, which is nominally the porters' but actually in control of the Company. I am frank to say that there is deep objection among all Negroes, arising out of a long and bitter experience, to any agency which is Negro only in name, but which is really dominated by white men. Without the knowledge of this race psychology, you will be utterly unable ever rationally and effectively to deal with your porter personnel problem with a sure and constructive industrial statesmanship.

#### Information of Pullman Welfare Workers Unreliable

Of this attitude of mind of the porters and maids you will never hear from the mouths of your Negro welfare workers, because of them, the welfare worker's, fear that it would simply tend to incur your displeasure. Your welfare workers report to you only those things they think you want to hear. They never tell you the truth about the thinking and spirit of the porters or of the Negro race as a whole. In the first place, they don't think that you believe the truth, and in the second place, granting that you did believe it, they assume that you would consider them incompetent to handle developing

unrest among the men. But it is obvious, that if you base your policies, in dealing with porters, upon the misinformation furnished by your welfare workers, it will be, in the nature of things, utterly impossible for you to secure the maximum productive efficiency from them. The fact that you employ Negro welfare workers would seem to indicate that you appreciate the necessity of knowing something about the mind of the porter. But you are only getting half-truths is worse than your getting no truths, for, since such information can only serve to cause you to misdirect your efforts, it will cause you to defeat the very end you hope to achieve, namely, increased service efficiency.

#### Progress of Company

The material progress of the Pullman service industry has been marvelous, unprecedented. The entire American public has been the beneficiary of the constructive resourcefulness and ingenuity of its management in mechanical elaboration and perfection of physical equipment.

From the wooden, kerosene-lamp miniature sleeper, has developed the magnificent, richly decorated and furnished standard sixteen section sleeper, and your very recent addition, the fourteen-room car, which probably represents the last word in luxury and comfort, in transit, on rails.

#### New Equipment

You have spared no means in fashioning an environment of such a work of art for the traveling public as would elicit from them a response of aesthetic appreciation and enjoyment. To this end President Carey in the Annual Report of July 31, 1926, stated that during the six years and five months since the property was released from Federal control (March 1, 1920), \$81,473,100 had been invested in new equipment, and that of this amount \$17,274,313, was invested in 546 new cars in the fiscal year just closed.

#### Depreciation Policy

For the replacement of equipment you have long followed an exceedingly liberal depreciation policy. According to your balance sheet, \$86,432,333 of earnings have been charged in your company equipment depreciation account. Your cars and equipment trench hard upon two hundred millions, or, more accurately, \$196,841,691.

#### Financial Growth

According to the Interstate Commerce Commission, the total cash investment of the Pullman Company up to 1924, was \$32,602,238. Your present capitalization, however, is \$135,000,000 brought to that figure by the reinvestment of surplus earnings and the issue of stocks as dividends and in exchange for property. Since 1897, the Pullman Company has distributed \$345,675,000 in cash dividends and \$60,000,000 in stock dividends.

Such is the stupendous and remarkable progress your company has made in material and mechanical refinement in financing and organization.

In management, technique, too, your Company has moved apace.

#### Progress of Porters and Maids

I need not tell you that, in the nature of things, it would be impossible for the porters and maids to be a part of this phenomenal progress, playing a considerable and basic part in giving its existence, without being profoundly influenced intellectually and spiritually. In very truth, the porter of fifty years ago, with the wicker-lamp, wooden car mind, could no more properly handle the deluxe standard sleeping, parlor, buffet, room, observation, steel cars of today than could the wooden, wicker-lamp cars of yesterday meet the rigid and exacting industrial and social requirements of modern travel. The former only required a porter with a primitive, rural mind; the latter, a porter with an alert, urbanized mind. I think you will agree that the vast progress of the Company would not have been possible with the porter with the slow-moving rural mind. A person needs much more urbanization to be able efficiently to handle the highly elaborated mechanism of the Pullman car. And along with

the transformation of the rural mind of the porter into an urban mind, goes a progressive change in worth, service technique and competency and productivity. But accompanying this urbanization and improvement in the productive ability of the porter, go the needs, desires, interests, hopes and demands of an urban citizen.

The history of all social psychology shows that the latter inevitably follows the former. The wage increases you have granted are based upon the assumption that a porter of today, with an urban mind, is worth more to the Company than a porter of yesterday, with a rural mind.

And it may be interesting for you to know that this demand of your porters and maids for higher standards of living, better wages, hourage and working conditions, is merely a manifestation of a general movement forward of the Negro race. In the last fifty years, the race has accumulated 2 billions in property; its illiteracy has decreased over eighty-five per cent in fifty years. In 1926 there were practically 5,000 Negro doctors, 2,500 Negro dentists and 3,000 Negro lawyers. In 1920 there were 3,341 trained nurses. There are one hundred Negro banks, seventy-five Negro insurance companies and 343 periodicals. In literature, art and science, the Negro has made substantial and enduring contributions, of unquestioned world merit in reaches and quality to society. . . .

#### Union of Porters Inevitable

Industrial unrest of the porters and maids cannot be removed through summary repression. If stopped at one point, temporarily it will find expression through other channels, that may not be rational and constructive.

Porters and maids could no more remain on the same cars with the conductors and on the same trains with other train crews, who seek through collective bargaining, to improve their conditions and not seek to employ the very same method of collective bargaining to improve their conditions, than could a man fail to seek food when hungry or water fail to seek its level. Even granting that the Brotherhood should fail, it would not amount to a destruction of the will of the porters to organize. The will of self-organization, without interference, coercion or intimidation, may be stifled, crushed, for awhile and delayed, but it cannot be permanently destroyed; nor can it be killed by a mere increase in wages and better working conditions apparently secured through the Plan. The Company can get no relief from a besetting unrest by temporary victories over attempts of porters and maids to organize, assuming that it can win such victories, for these victories are, in reality, but harbingers of ultimate permanent victory of the porters in bona fide self-organization.

May I say that a contract with the porters and maids not to organize would be meaningless and valueless even granting that the law validated such a contract, for the urge and necessity for organization inherent in the industrial conditions of being a porter. They can no more agree not to organize, with the ability to execute said agreement, than can a boy agree not to grow, with the ability to execute said agreement.

Conditions have convinced the porters and maids that they cannot rely upon anything to safeguard their interests but their own organization which is untrammelled, in the least, in the selection and designation of representatives for the formulation, presentation of their case, and the handling of recurrent grievances. No benevolent paternalistic grievance adjusting system such as the Plan will suffice. The rise and existence of the Brotherhood is incontrovertible evidence of the truth and soundness of this proposition.

#### Attitude of Company to Conductors

May I say that I am quite reassured by your jointly settling up an Adjustment Board with the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors, under the provisions of the new Railway Labor Act, which recognizes and sanctions the principle of collective bargaining on wages and working conditions, that you will not be disinclined consistently to pursue the same labor policy with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters which represents a majority of your employees in this class of service.

I cannot believe that you would entertain, for one moment, the idea or indulge the practice of making any morally unjustifiable and untenable

distinction between your conductors and porters in the recognition and application of the principle of self-organization and the self-designation and selection of representatives for collective bargaining and the adjustment of disputes. I am certain that you must realize that there are ample facts, scientific, industrial for such a distinction, and that such could not be construed as in harmony with the express language and implied spirit and intent of the Federal statute.

I am sure you would not join hands in the adoption of a course of action which you thought was harmful to the Company and conductors. Thus, I think you will agree that the porters and the public are justified in assuming by your recognition of the conductors' union that you don't consider the principle of self-organization, self-designation of representatives for collective bargaining, as inimical to the welfare and interests of the Company, the conductors or the porters and maids.

Therefore, I assume that the question of organization will not be an issue if it can be demonstrated that the porters and maids want it, which, of course, is a logical position. If the porters didn't want organization, the Brotherhood could not well claim that they did, since such a claim is subject to verification by a disinterested Government body, the United States Mediation Board.

No legitimate objection can be raised against the organization of porters on the grounds that it will destroy discipline, for, in the first place a bonafide functioning organization of porters and maids has never existed; hence no grounds of fact exist upon which to base such an assumption. Moreover, it is perfectly unfair to predicate attributes and behavior of a group of men and women under conditions they have never experienced. Instead of organization subverting discipline, it will greatly improve it, since the very organization of porters presupposes, implies and indicates their susceptibility to discipline, for discipline is nothing more than the implicit acceptance of, and obedience to, definite rules of behavior, which is the recognized condition of organization.

But if organization is believed by you to be injurious to the discipline of the porters, why do you maintain the Employees Representation Plan for them? It is my understanding that you allege the Plan to be an organization; hence, rendering another form of organization superfluous and unnecessary.

#### Value of Brotherhood to Company

Can the Brotherhood be of any actual value to the Company? It decidedly can. It can effectively weed out the shiftless, irresponsible element from the service which constitute a definite liability, and attract and secure more men of pronounced character, industry, and worth, for the work.

It can stabilize the turn-over, thereby achieving a higher degree of efficiency through the attractive impressment of porters and maids into the service, over longer periods.

The development of efficiency in the handling of Safety First devices and methods can be greatly facilitated under the Brotherhood's stimulation and control.

As to service, a more resourceful and constructive system of service education can be developed in the hands of the porters' own union. A more rational and higher conception of its social dignity and importance can be inculcated in the minds of the porters through the Brotherhood, which will express itself in definite productive value.

A higher level of morale of the porters and maids can be attained by the Brotherhood over that of the Plan, since the rigid, though reasonable disciplinary exactions of the former, are adjusted by the porters as the manifestation of their own will, whereas, discipline under the Plan is considered irksome, distasteful and oppressive, because it is imposed from without by the Company, which is viewed and followed by the porters, more often through fear than love. This negative psychological attitude prevents the Company from realizing maximum production results from the service efforts of the porters and maids.

More substantial and consistent economics, compatible with a high standard of service, can be effectively instituted and executed under and through the machinery of the Brotherhood because of the belief on the part of the

porters that they will participate in the beneficent results of such economics than under the Plan.

There is also the problem of elaborate espionage. It utterly fails to accomplish the end for which it is intended. Besides, it may be listed on the debit side of the ledger. As an engine for the production of fear, it may be rated high in efficiency, but as an agency for creating good will and intelligent initiative among the porters, it is hopelessly bankrupt. It is an unbearable tax upon the frailty of human nature to expect that types of men who willingly consent to engage in espionage which brings upon their heads the curses and contempt of their fellow-workers can be fully trusted by anybody. Industrial espionage is based upon the theory that the labor personnel of the Company as discontented and that undercover men are essential to prevent organization which is deemed deleterious to the interests of the Company. But there is ample labor history to show that it does not permanently prevent organization or agitation. It only serves to create a sullen and expensive skepticism of the spirit of fair-play of the employer.

On the other hand, when men are contented, born of a belief and feeling that the opportunity to improve their conditions has been wide and unrestricted, that representatives who conduct negotiations, in their behalf with the Company, are freely designated by them; that the Company does not seek, in any way, to influence their selection of representatives; that a spirit of mutuality, good will and cooperation are religiously fostered between the porters and the management will work with a freshness, ardor, loyal willingness and interest which cannot fail to reflect itself in more and finer production.

Industrial peace and order will logically and naturally flow from the above pictured attitude of mind, and it is a matter of commonplace industrial engineering that order and peace are an indispensable condition to high production standards. If peace and order are to be established and maintained among those associated with the industrial life of the Pullman Company, they must think and act in terms of constructive cooperation, understanding and mutuality.

This involves a complete recognition of the rights of the porters and maids who constitute a substantial section of the human forces of the industry. There can be no honorable reciprocal relationship where the management attempt to deny to the porters and maids the exercise of a legal or moral right. Such an attempt can only foster and breed ill will, resentment, antagonism and spiritual maladjustment which will certainly tend to press the curve of service efficiency downward. It has been well said that men feel very strongly toward those who seek to abridge their activities or infringe upon their rights. They cannot entertain kindly feelings for those who prevent them from doing the things they have a right to do. Such an attitude creates hatred, bitterness and conflict, which must necessarily increase production costs.

It is pretty substantially accepted by economic experts that a scientific coordination of human and mechanical forces is the only sound formula for the achievement of higher production standards and lower production costs. But, modern psychology will unerringly demonstrate that this co-ordination and correlation of human and mechanical forces cannot be attained under a condition of spiritual resentment of the human forces to a curtailment of volitional organizational action.

#### Train Crews and the Brotherhood

If associated effort as between the various sections of labor personnel in a given industry makes for increased production, so will associated effort between two industrial groups, say, the train crews and the Pullman crews, make for a larger total efficiency on a given train, as well as a larger specific efficiency of each individual industrial group. Concretely, the Pullman service will surely be the beneficiary of the cooperation between the train crews and the Pullman crews. This is obvious because the work relates at certain points. But such cooperation would hardly be possible if the train crews feel that a large section of the Pullman crews are scabs, their enemies. Scabs are despised by all union men which emotionally prevents willing and helpful cooperation. This accounts for the support which the Brotherhood receives from the standard railroad unions. It is, therefore,

palpably to the interest of the Company to have the porters and maids organized into bonafide union which other railroad unions will respect and recognize. Modern economic history irrefutably proves that union labor raise, instead of lowering production. The reason is that a union man develops a higher sense of self-respect and responsibility, skill and regularity. It is beyond the realm of doubt, that a porter who is sufficiently venturesome to brave the possibility of being fired, by joining a union, means much more to the Company as a producing unit than a porter who is willing to endure conditions which he actually and honestly would desire changed. The former, has initiative, industry and moral courage; the latter, is morally weak and shiftless. No porter can be truly trusted by you who does not trust himself to help improve his wage and working conditions in cooperation with his fellow-employees, when an organized, systematic, intelligent effort is made to so improve conditions.

#### Conduct of Brotherhood

In order that you may be fully disillusioned with respect to lurid and sinister rumors about the Brotherhood, we willingly invite any disinterested body of public spirited citizens to examine into the conduct of the affairs of the organization. The finances of the Brotherhood are handled by a recognized, responsible, standard accounting firm of New York, headed by Mr. Stuart Chase, at 2 West 43rd Street.

The Brotherhood's affairs are as scrupulously conducted as any institution in America, an audit being made monthly, quite an unusual procedure for most concerns. This is done to insure the absolute protection of the interest of its members, and to convince the world that the Brotherhood is not a money-making, grafting proposition, for the personal aggrandizement of a few selfish men, but that it is a great movement of social and racial significance, of practical idealism which is conducted honestly and honorably and efficiently for the collective well-being and interests of its membership, the Pullman Company and the general public.

#### Attitude of Negro Public

You have only to canvass Negro public opinion to find a virtual unanimity of interest in the success of the Brotherhood. It is viewed as the most significant economic movement of racial progress instituted in the last half century. The most outstanding Negro organizations and leaders such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the leaders of the National Urban League, the National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the Shriners, The Elks, The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of New York, the members of which are preaching Brotherhood sermons, the International Negro Ministerial Alliance of America, the Negro Race Congress, headed by Dr. Jernigan of Washington, and practically the entire Negro press, stand behind the Brotherhood.

#### The White Public

Of the attitude of the white public, doubtless you are to some extent aware, for you surely know of the public prominence of a large number of the men and women who compose our Committee of One Hundred. It certainly speaks definitely for the responsibility of our movement. None of the persons, who are members of the Committee, can be accused of readily affixing their names to anything in which they have no confidence. Especially, would they be hesitant about venturing into the Brotherhood, implicit with big and far-reaching principles, unless they were committed to its program.

Permit me herewith to reassure you that the Brotherhood stands ready to submit to, and abide by, the Watson-Parker Bill, which has established the procedure of mediation or arbitration of disputes between self organized employees and carriers. We feel that the dispute between the membership of the Brotherhood which embraces the majority of your employees of this class of service, and the Pullman Company can be amicably adjudged through mediation or arbitration as provided in the law.

If you feel that the Brotherhood has no case, I am sure you would not be

opposed to having this fact established through fair and impartial arbitration as provided by the Act, since you could sustain no loss, but only secure a reaffirmation of your contention. If the Brotherhood has a case, I think you will also agree that it would be industrially inexpedient to deny same, since it could only tend to give force to a continuing vexatious condition of discontent among the porters and maids, which will render an eventual definite handling of the situation through mediation, arbitration or direct conference, advisable and imperative.

In conclusion, the Brotherhood is building a new porter, upstanding, responsible, efficient with initiative and constructive practical intelligence who will work to build up a bigger and better Pullman industry to serve the nation. You will find the Brotherhood ever ready fully to cooperate with you frankly, intelligently, loyally and honorably to achieve this end mutually beneficial to the prosperity and human elements of the Pullman industry.

As the designated spokesman of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, I have the honor to remain

Respectfully yours,  
A. PHILIP RANDOLPH,  
General Organizer, Brotherhood of  
Sleeping Car Porters.

Original in the Lowell M. Greenlaw Papers, Chicago Historical Society, also published in *The Messenger*, 9 (July, 1927): 237-41.

### 23. THE PORTERS' UNION GOES SOUTH

An Unknown Negro Writes A New Page in Labor History  
By Frank R. Crosswaith

"Am fully mindful of the grave seriousness of the situation and personal danger. Conscientiously feel brotherhood's cause is so righteously important, that a firm stand should be taken. Have fully decided to remain and meet the consequences. This means that I am willing to make the supreme sacrifice. Have sacredly dedicated my all to the promotion of the brotherhood's noble cause. Advise at once. Being constantly intimidated by Pullman Negro officials."

This remarkable telegram was received by A. Philip Randolph, general organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, at its headquarters, 2311 Seventh avenue, New York City, and was sent by Bennie Smith, field organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, stationed in Jacksonville, Florida. It substantiates fully what every unprejudiced student of American labor and all sincere friends of the Negro have consistently claimed--that the Negro workers of the nation whenever reached by the message of organized labor and inspired with labor's ideals will bring to the movement that rich spiritual contribution, that fidelity in ideals, that unfading courage in the face of great danger which have characterized the Negro throughout his history in the United States. In some respects these invaluable and ennobling contributions destined to be made by the Negro is the cause of labor in its struggle against wage slavery, will be even more startlingly brilliant and socially serviceable than the soul-sustaining spirituals wrung from him by the master's lash during the de-humanizing days of chattel slavery.

#### An Early Volunteer

Bennie Smith had served the Pullman company faithfully and efficiently for twenty years, during which period he succeeded in chalking up a record termed "enviable" by both his fellow workers and his employers. When the movement to organize the porters began, among the first to join was Bennie Smith of the Omaha, Nebraska district of the Pullman company. Smith not alone joined the organization, but exerted his every influence to bring the other porters in his immediate district into the brotherhood. His attitude



added tremendously to the immense popularity he already enjoyed among the men.

When the Pullman company became alarmed over the rapid growth and expansion of the Brother of Sleeping Car Porters it decided to call a conference under the aegis of its "company union." Bennie Smith was elected a delegate from his district; at the time he was local officer in the "Employee Representative Plan"--the company union. At the conference, held in Chicago, the company first gave the porters a slight wage increase and then handed the delegates a company-made agreement to be signed by them. Two of the delegates had the courage and manhood to refuse to sign on the dotted line; one of these was Bennie Smith, the Nebraskan rebel, and the other, W. H. Edwards, of St. Louis, Mo. These two dissident porters remained adamant against the pleas of their more gullible and spineless fellow delegates as well as against the threats of the company representatives in the conference.

Upon the return of Bennie to his district the local Pullman officials began to exact from him a high price for his stand in the conference. All manner of mean things were done to him, calculated to get him disgusted with the service and eventually out of it. But Bennie was wiser than they had given him credit for being. The same stalwart courage and bravery which characterize the telegram above sustained him and he continued to be the efficient and capable porter as before. He would permit no one to mar his "enviable" record with the company.

#### Smith is Summoned

The company next called for the election of delegates to a convention of the Pullman Porters' Benevolent Association--the benevolent feature of the company union--and again Bennie's name was placed in nomination by his fellow porters to the awe and chagrin of the company's officials. Immediately a campaign was quietly started to insure the defeat of Bennie. Porters were secretly advised "not to vote for Bennie Smith," that "he was disloyal to the company", etcetra.

When told of this Bennie complained to the head of the industrial bureau of the company, in whose hands is lodged the responsibility for making the company union function. This move on the part of Bennie offered the company its long awaited chance to clip with a terrible thorn in its collective sides. The head of the bureau called Bennie to Chicago "in order that he might in person, file his complaint against his local superior officer;" Bennie was also to "bring along the names of the porters who told him that the Omaha superintendent had advised them not to vote for him"

Realizing that in the event he did comply with the latter request not alone would he be penalized, since never before in the history of the bureau had a porter been found guiltless in a dispute with an official of the company, but that his fellow workers who had informed him of the secret instructions would be penalized as well. He therefore agreed to appear before the bureau, but refused to disclose the names of his brothers. The result was that Bennie was dismissed from the service. Thereupon he was employed as field organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and proceeded to prove that not alone was he a good porter, but an equally courageous and capable labor organizer.

About two months ago he was ordered by National Headquarters to leave St. Louis, Mo., and proceed to Jacksonville, Fla. Arriving there he found that the local porters knew very little about the Brotherhood. In the spirit of the pioneer, Bennie endeavored to inform them of the struggle being waged by their brothers in other districts for a living wage and improved working conditions. In short order he had a goodly number of the Jacksonville porters enrolled, to the alarm of the local stool pigeons as well as the officials of the company.

#### Invitation Extended

One of the methods being employed by the company to thwart the efforts of the Brotherhood is the touring of Negro Pullman officials through the various districts to make speeches against the Brotherhood. Accordingly, on April 20 C. C. Webb of Chicago made his debut in Jacksonville, Fla., and delivered his customary tirade against the organization. On the next day Mr. Webb is said to have informed the local superintendent that "Bennie was in town."

Some of the local lackeys were then called in and told that "I think it would be a good idea to give Bennie Smith an invitation to leave town." The lackeys of course, were to get word to Bennie indirectly. When the information reached him, Bennie ignored it and continued to quietly enroll new members in the Brotherhood.

On the morning of May 18 two detectives called at Bennie's temporary headquarters. He was out. They left word for him "to report immediately to Police Headquarters and see Chief Roberts." Upon so doing the chief questioned Bennie about "his business in Jacksonville," at the same time remarking cynically that "he didn't care anything about the organization of the Pullman porters," but "he did care about 'The Messenger'--the official organ of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters--because "there was some damn bad stuff in it" and that he (Bennie) "was going to be put in jail."

Bennie then asked the chief to tell him which of the issues of The Messenger had the objectionable matter in it, or would he kindly let him see the particular copy.

Evidently, unaware of the trap set for him by the resourceful Bennie, the chief naively replied that "Mr. Franklin E. Cooper (the local Pullman superintendent) had the copies" and that he (Bennie) should report at the Police Station at nine o'clock the next morning when Mr. Cooper would be present with the copies of The Messenger to file charges. Chief Roberts then ventured the opinion that "The Messenger had been preaching social equality and stirring up the Negroes."

#### A Judicial Reception

Obviously when Negro workers demand a living wage, better working conditions plus the right to organize in their own union, they are considered by the Pullman Company as making a bid for social equality. Bennie then tried to get in touch with the Judge in order that he might explain to that dignitary his presence in Jacksonville and was informed by that dispenser of justice that he (the Judge) knew all about it, and that he had it in "black and white" and that Smith had better get back to headquarters.

Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Bennie immediately secured local advice and was informed that inasmuch as there had been no charges made against him, no warrant issued for his arrest, and, furthermore, since he had violated no law, he was legally within his rights in remaining away from the courts of Jacksonville. The next day W. H. Mitchell, a local Negro Pullman official, made three trips to Bennie's room to tell him that "if he remained in Jacksonville he would do so at the risk of his life," that "because of certain information he had gathered and the dangerous conditions of the South it was extremely hazardous for him (Bennie) to remain in that section," and, besides, many white people had been asking about him.

The inference here is unmistakable. Bennie immediately informed this sable-skinned emissary of the company that it was his intention to leave Jacksonville at an early date, but that in view of the sudden developments, he was willing to hasten his departure if he knew positively that Mr. Cooper (Pullman superintendent) desired it.

#### Smith Leaves Town

The stool-pigeon fell into the trap and immediately left Bennie with the expressed intention of "returning to let him know how the superintendent felt about the matter." Upon returning, Mitchell informed Bennie that "it was best for his personal safety if he left town at the very earliest possible moment." He treacherously added, "The superintendent didn't say so, but I overheard something." Bennie then refused to leave town.

Meanwhile preparations for Bennie's arrest and incarceration were being made; he, however, steadfastly refused to leave Jacksonville. He did so only after A. Philip Randolph sent him the following wire: "Your word against Cooper's is valueless in a Southern court. Leave immediately." Some hours later Bennie Smith was passing through Waycross, Ga., on his way to Chicago, Ill.

Bennie Smith will be sent back to Jacksonville by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters after steps have been taken to give him all possible legal protection. For, as he very tersely stated in one of his messages to head-

quarters, "I am not afraid of the law, for I have done no wrong. But I am concerned about the outlaw." Thereby ends, for a time at least, a most dazzling and inspiring chapter in labor's history contributed by the rapidly awakening Negro workers of the nation.

American labor can make of the industrially arrived Negro worker a promise or a menace. What will its decision be?

*The New Leader*, June 25, 1927.

#### 24. THE PULLMAN PORTERS' ORGANIZATION

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*Chicago Defender*, November 19, 1927.

25. PORTERS GET INSIDE DATA ON WAGE TILT

Organizer of Union Outlines Fight

By A. Philip Randolph, General Organizer

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*Chicago Defender*, November 19, 1927.



## 26. STATUS OF PULLMAN PORTERS' CASE

By A. Philip Randolph  
General Organizer

In the Congress Hotel, Chicago, mediation of the question of representation between the Pullman Company and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, is now going on by Honorable Edwin P. Morrow of the U.S. Mediation Board.

This is a far cry from August 25, 1926, when, as a result of nationwide unrest among the porters with The Employee Representation Plan which has failed, after six years trial satisfactorily to adjust disputes, the Brotherhood was born. Like a prairie fire, the Movement swept the country, and on December 10th, 1926, the first step in settling the dispute between The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Pullman Company was taken by the U.S. Mediation Board.

The procedure instituted was as follows: After the Brotherhood had secured a majority of the porters and maids in the service, the General Organizer addressed a letter to the Pullman Company, requesting a conference, which was denied. Whereupon, he made an ex parte application to the U.S. Mediation Board for its services to mediate the dispute.

December 10th, Honorable Edwin P. Morrow, member of the Board was dispatched to Chicago to inquire into the merits of the dispute. The representatives of the Brotherhood and the Pullman Company were ordered to lay their claims in the dispute before him.

The Brotherhood, in the hearings which lasted a week or more, presented its side of the dispute, contending (1) That it embraced the majority of the porters and maids in the service, (2) that the Employee Representation Plan, organized and controlled by the Company, has no standing under the new Railway Labor Act.

The Company contended that the Brotherhood did not represent the porters and maids since 85 percent had voted for the Employee Representation Plan in the last election. The Brotherhood replied by producing 1000 affidavits from porters showing that they voted under coercion, intimidation and interference of the Company, that they did not vote of their own free will, but under threat of being pulled off their runs or of losing their jobs.

In the opinion of the U.S. Mediation Board, the facts and arguments presented by the Brotherhood were sufficiently meritorious to warrant the Board making further investigation into the case.

In February, the Board so decided to further investigate the case.

On the 4th of May of this year, Mr. Morrow, was deputed to go to the headquarters of the Brotherhood in New York and go more fully into the records and documents of the Brotherhood substantiating its claims. He had the statistician of the Board, Mr. W. C. Mitchell to come to the Brotherhood's office and carefully examine all of the membership blanks, records and finances of the Brotherhood. This investigation lasted four days. A report was made to the Board on the investigation and July 11, Mr. Morrow was ordered to Chicago by the Board to proceed with the work of mediating the question of representation, which is the basic principle in dispute.

Such is the present status of the case. From the trend of mediation, some definite position on representation between the Company and the Brotherhood, will be reached very shortly. Mr. Morrow has declared his intention of continuing on the case until some settlement is reached or he will recommend arbitration.

Propaganda to the effect that the Board had turned down the Brotherhood's case was as erroneous as it was malicious. But the response of the porters and maids in paying dues indicates that it was not only not believed but that it stimulated them to great loyalty and devotion to the Organization.

Mr. M. P. Webster, Organizer, Chicago Division, and the General Organizer are the Committee representing the Brotherhood at this stage of the negotiation. This committee will be joined later by Roy Lancaster, Secretary-Treasurer; Bennie Smith, Field Organizer; A. L. Totten, Assistant General Organizer; E. J. Bradley, Organizer, St. Louis Division; W. H. Des Verney, Assistant General Organizer, if occasion arise.

Donald R. Richberg, author of New Railway Labor Act is giving the

Brotherhood's representatives counsel constantly. Should mediation fail, arbitration will follow.

*The Messenger*, 9 (September, 1927): 284.

27. BEFORE THE INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS,  
*Plaintiff,*

Docket No. 20,007.

*against*

Petitioner's Brief on Motion  
to Dismiss

The Pullman Company

*Defendant.*

The motion to dismiss alleges as grounds of dismissal:

"The allegations set forth in the complaint do not state a cause of action over which the Commission has jurisdiction.

"The Commission is without authority to grant the relief prayed for or any relief."

This brief will attempt to show that the Commission has ample jurisdiction in the premises and power to grant the relief prayed for.

Nature of the Matters Complained of.

The petition alleges that defendant since 1867 has continuously maintained and now maintains a practice whereby it encourages and permits porters in its service to receive contributions in money, tips and gratuities from passengers. The prayer of the petition is that the Commission, pursuant to its powers under Sec. 13 of the Interstate Commerce Act, investigate the said practice and policy of the defendant and issue such order as the facts and circumstances, in the judgment of the Commission, may warrant, and, specifically, that the defendant be required to cease and desist from:

- a: Directly or indirectly, informing or instructing applicants for positions as porters that they may expect increment to their wages from passengers.
- b: Inducing or permitting porters in its service to receive gratuities from passengers.
- c: Continuing to fix wage rates for porters at an amount insufficient to enable them to remain in the service.
- d: All acts, policies or practices tending to produce discriminations among passengers in the service rendered them by its employees.
- e: Inducing payment by passengers for services rendered in excess of the price indicated on the ticket of passengers.

At the outset, it must be firmly grasped that The Pullman Company as a common carrier is an agent of the public, that porters are employees of a public agent, and that it is the position of petitioner that tipping affects and impairs the performance of duties which The Pullman Company owes the public. The practice is complained of in its relation to the public service.

The injurious effect on the public service of the tipping practice will more clearly appear if the duties of porters are described in some detail. These duties are set out in a booklet of instructions to porters issued by defendant January 1, 1925. Some two hundred and seventeen matters are listed to which the porter must give detailed and often continuous attention. Many of them affect substantially the health, safety and comfort of passengers. The quality and quantity of performance of these duties necessarily affect passengers in said respects.

The rules of the porter's service are grouped under nine headings. They comprise such duties as the care of linen, blankets, towels, pillows, the

preparation and closing of berths, the handling of baggage, guarding cars, care of equipment, ventilation, heating and lighting, protecting the safety of passengers and of their property, and the maintenance of sanitary and police regulations. The porter is a policeman, a health officer, and a house superintendent. He controls ventilation, heating, lighting, sanitation and safety. By day and night he is the guardian of the safety of passengers and their belongings.

The porter has other police duties. He is an aid to the train conductor in charge. The porter must enforce sanitary regulations, must make sure that passengers are not suffering from smallpox, cholera, typhoid fever or plague; that persons suffering from infectious diseases, other than those named, are accompanied by a qualified trained attendant, and that they have the entrance and removal permits required by law to enable them to go from one state to another. The porter must see to it that tubercular passengers are provided with proper means for collecting and destroying sputum.

These duties of a sanitary officer are set out in the rules referred to and porters are therein instructed to familiarize themselves with the regulations contained in the Interstate Quarantine Regulations of the United States Government and the Standard Railway Sanitary Code of the States and in a pamphlet entitled "Communicable Diseases and Travel" which are stated to be on file in the district offices of the company.

The porter is required, also, to see to it that the laws of the several states with regard to gambling, card playing and Sunday regulations are enforced. He also has duties with regard to preventing dutiable articles from being transported without payment of customs and duties under the Immigration laws; and he must aid to enforce the prohibition laws of the United States.

#### Description of the Tipping Practice.

Upon the performance of the duties described above, the tipping practice impinges. The influence of the practice on such performance varies with a number of factors. Among these are the character of the porter, his conception of his obligation to the public and his employer, the generosity or meagerness of the tip, the manner of the tipping or non-tipping passenger, the degree of intensity of economic pressure upon the porter, the vigilance of Pullman inspectors and "spotters," the number of passengers in the car, the length and condition of the journey and other factors.

The time of tipping varies. Some passengers make their contribution early in the journey believing it most efficacious then. The great majority defer it until they leave the car at the end of their journey. This has an important effect on the length of the porter's run as is shown below.

The purpose of the tip varies. It may be in the nature of a bribe to induce the porter to acquiesce in the violation of sanitary or police regulations or to secure an inordinate amount of the porter's attention as against other passengers. In this case, of course, it is usually paid otherwise than at the end of the journey. The tip may be in consideration of legitimate personal services rendered to the passenger by the porter over and outside of the duties required by the company, and in that case indicates merely an employment of the porter by the passenger. It may be simply a gratuity without any service rendered because, for example, the passenger knows the porter cannot remain in the service on the wages paid by The Pullman Company. The usual personal service such as shining shoes and carrying baggage are required by the company. Hence a tip for such service does not indicate employment by the passenger. It is understood that the porter shall proffer a brushing off. Otherwise than at terminals this is usually the invitation and opportunity to the passenger to provide the tip.

The amount of the tip varies with its purpose and with the financial ability and propensity of the passenger and with the alacrity and manner of the porter. It is believed to average about \$58 a month to each porter in active service and not less in the aggregate than \$7,000,000 per annum. This subject is more fully discussed below in connection with the wages and working conditions of porters.

#### Wages and Working Conditions of Porters.

The tipping practice is and has always been an important factor in the wages and working conditions of the porters.

The defendant employs from 10,000 to 12,000 porters. They are paid on a mileage basis. The standard is 11,000 miles or about 400 hours of road service. Beyond this porters are entitled to overtime. Monthly wage rates effective February 15, 1926, are as follows:

Length of Service	Standard Sleeping & Parlor cars	Tourists' Cars	Outside & Parlor Car Men	Porters in Charge	Priv. Car Porters in Charge	Maids
Less than 2 years	\$72.50	\$78.50	\$84.50	\$85.	\$90.50	\$70.
2 to 5 yrs.	76.	84.	88.50	89.	95.	73.50
5 to 15 yrs.	80.	86.	93.	93.	99.50	77.
Over 15 yrs.	83.	89.	97.	97.70	104.	80.50

Overtime is earned when mileage in excess of 11,000 miles per month has been covered. It is paid at the rate of .61 of \$.01 per mile.

In addition to road service, the porter must be in attendance at terminals for several hours before the train starts and also put the car in shape after arrival. For these services he receives no pay.

#### Basis of Estimate of Amount of Tips Received .

In 1926, at the instance of the petitioner, the Labor Bureau of New York received 777 questionnaires filled out by porters showing runs and tips received. The average mileage per run was 1,282.38. The average porter makes 14.6 runs a month averaging 38.6 hours each. The average porter serves 293.36 hours of road work per month and, in addition, three hours of preparatory time each trip and about one hour terminal time. Average wage received is \$78.11 per month; 673 regular porters averaged in \$7.56 each round trip and monthly \$58.15. The questionnaire shows large variations in amounts received from tips; 376 earned less than \$60 a month therefrom, while 245 earned more than \$60; 5 earned less than \$15, and 2 more than \$200.

It appears from the returns to the questionnaires that earnings and tips depend upon the opportunity given by the company in the allotment of runs. The porters assigned to tourist cars receive a differential over the base rate because "tourists" are poor tipplers. Higher wage rates are established for parlor car porters inasmuch as the parlor car travellers are more meager tipplers than sleeping car travellers.

The questionnaire also showed seasonal variation in earnings and tips. From April 15th to June 15th is the dead season. Traffic and tips are then light. From June 15th to Labor Day traffic is brisk and tips increase; after Labor Day the trend of travel is at another low level where it remains until the week before Thanksgiving; a brief rush period then ensues, after which there comes another lull which endures until the week before Christmas. From Christmas to April 15th the winter season is on, during which travel and tipping are larger.

#### The Effect of the Tipping System on the Wage Rates Paid by The Pullman Company.

Obviously, The Pullman Company saves in its wage bill approximately the amount contributed by the public in tips. As it employs approximately 10,000 porters and the answers to the questionnaires show an average of about \$58 per month, the amount contributed by the public appears to be about \$720,000 a month or approximately \$8,640,000 per annum. This is believed to be approximately the annual amount The Pullman Company saves in its wage costs by the tipping practice. As said practice has been in effect since 1867, when the Pullman Company began business, the total saved to it by tipping cannot be less than \$150,000,000. Some such sum has been contributed by the travelling public which has been accordingly burdened to approximately that amount.

The Pullman Company maintains the 400-hour basis as its standard of wage rates for the reason that that standard tied up with the tipping practice requires long runs, requires the porter to follow the car on any but the longest runs to destination; by this arrangement the porter is with the

passengers on arrival and then receives their tips. This practice of requiring long runs, averaging approximately 1200 miles and 38 hours per run, necessitates also, under the rules of the company, that the porter do without adequate sleep during the run.

It is recognized that a reasonable amount of sleep and rest is necessary for the performance of railroad service--witness, for example, the 16 hour law. In determining the effect of the tipping system on the quality and quantity of defendant's service to passengers through porters, the amount of sleep available to porters under defendant's rules is relevant.

On this subject the questionnaire affords evidence; 57% of the porters responding, or 323, report that they obtain three hours' sleep a night; 92, or about 16%, report that they obtain no sleep; 133, or 23%, report that they obtain more than three hours ranging up to seven hours; 22, or some 4%, report that they obtain less than three hours' sleep.

Mr. L. S. Hungerford, General Manager of the Pullman Company, testified before the Federal Industrial Commission (see Vol. 10, pp. 9955-8) that under the rules of the company the porter is permitted to retire at 11.30 p.m. and is required to get up at 3 a.m. He is not permitted to sleep after 3 a.m. nor is he permitted to sleep during the day. At page 9955 Mr. Hungerford states that he does not think long runs good for the service.

Evidence Tending to Show that The Pullman Company permits, encourages and has officially confirmed and adopted the tipping practice.

It is submitted that the tipping practice is and has been continuously a policy and practice of the defendant. For purposes of this motion, the allegations of the petition must be taken as admitted. The petition alleges:

"IV (a) (p. 2). Defendant on or about February 27, 1867 instituted and has since maintained the practice . . . of paying said employees (porters) wages insufficient to enable them to remain in said service and of inducing passengers to contribute the compensation necessary to that end.

"XI (p.5). Defendant in 1867 adopted the policy of hiring only negroes as porters and paying them only one-half or two-thirds of the amount necessary to enable them to remain in its service. In thus taking negroes into its service defendant took over with them the gratuity custom and has since maintained, developed and officially confirmed it.

"XIII (p. 6). Among said acts (confirming said practice) are the following: Defendant, in employing porters, notifies them that passengers will contribute \$50 to \$100 per month and thus eke out the wage which defendant itself pays (approximately \$72.50 per month) to an income upon which it is possible for the porter to remain in the service. Defendant requires that porters perform personal services to passengers, such as cleaning shoes and clothes, and requires the porter to furnish supplies and equipment therefor. Defendant at all times since 1867 has fixed the wage paid by it in the light of the amount defendant estimates the porter will receive from passengers and by making the defendant's portion only approximately one-half to two-thirds of the said necessary wage. The said \$72.50 per month was established by defendant as a minimum rate for porters in February 1926. Prior thereto and before 1923 it was \$60; before 1919, \$48.50; before 1918, \$30; before 1916 for many years it was \$27.50. These amounts were at all times inadequate to enable said employees to remain in the service and forced them to induce passengers to make up the deficiency. A month's work is equivalent to 11,000 miles or 400 hours of road service and said minimum rates are and were the pay received by the great majority of porters from defendant. By said acts defendant has, in effect, instructed porters to obtain the necessary residue of their wages from passengers."

Statements of Officers of The Pullman Company before Public Bodies with regard to Tipping Practice.

That the Pullman Company permits the tipping practice is a matter of public knowledge and needs no proof. That it considers tips with relation to the length of runs is shown by proceedings of the Joint Conference held in Chicago January 27th to February 3rd 1926 under the Plan of Employee Representation. At that conference the employee representative requested the company to

consider a 240 hour basis instead of the 400 hour basis as the standard of wage rates. The representative of the company replied:

"The management cannot consider that proposition as it would work detrimentally for the company and for the porters, since it would result in cutting their runs down to a point where they would not make more than 240 hours per month, with the result that they would be cut off at interim points and lose their tips."

See Federal Industrial Commission Report (Vol. 10, pp. 9955 et seq.). Mr. Hungerford, General Manager of The Pullman Company, testified (p. 9955) that tipping is considered in fixing wage rates of porters for tourist car service at higher rates than those for the regular Pullman service; this for the reason that travellers on tourist cars are not of a class able or accustomed to pay tips; hence to induce porters to accept service in tourist cars the wage rates must be higher.

At p. 9597 Mr. Hungerford states that tips account for the fact that the company is able to get porters at \$27.50 per month (then the wage rate--1915), and obviously far less than a living wage.

At p. 9651 G. H. Sylvester, a characteristic porter among those long in the service of The Pullman Company, states that his earnings in tips are three times what is paid by the company, and further that he could not remain in the service if tips were abolished and the wage rate not increased.

Testimony of Robert T. Lincoln, President of The Pullman Company. Mr. Lincoln testified that if tips were abolished the company would have to raise wage rates to keep porters. He further states that the fact that the abolition of tips would require The Pullman Company to raise wages is the underlying reason why tips are not abolished (p. 9677). He further testified that Pullman rates to the public are based upon the tipping practice (9678). This must mean that in Mr. Lincoln's opinion if tips were abolished the rates to the public would have to be increased unless the company's dividends were decreased. Further, Mr. Lincoln testified that the porter would have to be paid a living wage if tips were abolished (9680).

Quotations have been made above from the report of the conference at Chicago January 27th to February 3rd 1926 under the Plan of Employee Representation, whereby it appears that the company's runs averaging some 1200 miles and 38 hours of continuous service are based upon the tipping practice.

For the purposes of this motion, the above is sufficient to demonstrate that the tipping practice has been adopted by The Pullman Company as a part of its permanent policy. The tipping practice determines the conduct of the service with regard to the allotment of runs and length of runs as well as the wage rates paid.

The reason for its adoption and retention is also clearly apparent, to wit, the saving in wage costs of not less than \$7,000,000 per annum. A practice so advantageous to the defendant will not be abandoned by it without a struggle to save it.

#### The Tipping Practice Produces Discrimination Among Passengers.

A description of the Porter's duties is set out above. It must be obvious that to permit the porter to receive tips produces or tends to produce discrimination, particularly in the performance of the duties described below.

*Order of making berths.* On a day and night journey the porter makes up berths in transit and must make them up in some successive order. The order is within his discretion and is often of great importance to passengers. The sick, feeble or tired traveller often wishes his berth made up among the first. It cannot be denied that tipping may, and often does, influence the porter in this regard and produces discrimination in favor of the generous tipper against the non-tipper or one whose appearance does not indicate a tipping propensity. Obviously too, tipping has a tendency to influence the porter as to ventilation and heating, screens in windows, and like services. As to these matters passengers often have conflicting desires.

The porter is an assistant to the train conductor with regard to enforcement of sanitary regulations. Tipping naturally tends to produce discrimination in that regard. Money in the nature of a bribe paid to the porter by travellers suffering from infectious diseases may well have a tendency to

disarm the porter's vigilance and induce him to refrain from making the proper report or from taking the proper action in that regard.

Indeed, all the police duties of the porter may well be affected by tipping which in this instance may amount to bribery. In a number of states there are laws against gambling and card playing on Sunday or otherwise. The payment of money to the porter, who alone has sufficient opportunity to observe the conduct of passengers, must have a tendency to induce him to acquiesce in violation of such laws.

It is also the duty of the porter to prevent and report violations of the prohibition law and of the rules of the defendant as to the consumption of intoxicating liquors by passengers on its cars. The payment of money to the porter by bibulous passengers tends to induce him to close his eyes to such violations.

On trains operating across international boundaries and from ports, such as Key West, porters have important duties with regard to the immigration and custom laws of the United States. As to immigration they are required to furnish passengers with governmental forms showing the passenger's nationality, etc., and see that they are filled out and turn them over to the immigration officers. This is a quasi-official service. Tipping tends to affect the porter's conduct in the performance of these duties. Immigrants, as well as cigars, liquors, and other dutiable articles, may be and often are, more readily smuggled if the acquiescence of the porter is obtained by means of what amounts to a bribe.

It will not do to say that such bribery would occur if tipping were abolished. In such case the payment of a bribe would have to be concealed and hence would become more difficult and dangerous, whereas under the present practice it may be given before all men without arousing any suspicion of violation of law.

It appears from the foregoing analysis that tipping tends to produce discrimination in the enforcement of the laws and in the performance of duties which are a part of the porter's obligations to the public as an employee of a common carrier and agent of the public.

It must be obvious that the practice produces or tends to produce discrimination as between the prosperous and the needy. The porter only has so much time to perform these duties. The tipping practice tends to induce him to satisfy first and primarily the needs and desires of the traveller having the apparent ability and willingness to make him a money payment and to defer or neglect those of the traveller having a less prosperous or non-tipping appearance or propensity.

The Tipping Practice tends to Injure the Quality of Service Rendered the Public by the Defendant as a Public Agent.

The connection of the tipping practice with the long run policy of the defendant has been referred to above. It is given as a reason for the maintenance of the long run policy by the officers of the defendant. According to the returns from the questionnaire, the runs average over 1200 miles and 38 hours. According to the statement of the defendant's officer, the long runs are maintained because they enable the porter to accompany the passenger to his destination and thus gives him better opportunity to receive money from the passengers. If the porter's run were shortened he could not afford to remain in the service because he would lose a large proportion of these payments. Yet, it is by reason of these long runs that the porter is deprived of the opportunity for necessary sleep and rest and thus deprived of the opportunity to keep himself in that condition of mental and physical alertness necessary for the adequate performance of his duties. By reason of the requirements of the long run, the average porter secures less than four hours' sleep in twenty-four hours while in service; and the necessity of earning enough to maintain himself at the low wage rates provided cuts him off from the opportunity to lay off and thus accumulate sufficient sleep and rest. Indeed, he is required by the rules to accept service whenever demanded by the defendant without regard to whether or not he has had an opportunity to secure rest. The Commission will take judicial notice that sleep of less than four hours for several nights in succession is insufficient for the maintenance of health. Yet, by the conditions of his service, the average porter secures no more.

The necessity of proper sleep and rest for employees engaged in the movement of trains is recognized by the sixteen hour law. Similar considerations are applicable to the porter's service. He, too, has duties which require mental and physical vigor and alertness. Thus, it appears that the long run policy in which the tipping practice inheres is detrimental to the service rendered by the defendant to the public.

There are other by-products of the practice complained of which tend to reduce the quality of the service rendered by the defendant. Thus, it is the practice of porters to bid for the runs producing high tips. Some runs carry more prosperous passengers than others and thus more tips can be earned on these runs. Yet the work and the quality of its performance are the same. It follows that the reward is disproportionate to the service rendered and has no relation to it. The reward depends upon the willingness and ability to tip of the passengers carried. Such a result is obnoxious to the canons underlying employment in public service and must tend to produce a poorer quality of service than a system based upon rewards to the service rendered.

Again, the practice tends to reward the capacity of the porter to ingratiate himself with prosperous passengers rather than in relation to the standards of performance in other ranks of the railroad service. In other ranks and promotion depend in some degree upon the quality of service rendered, but in the porters' service in The Pullman Company there are no such rewards. There is no avenue of promotion from the ranks of porters. He cannot hope to become a conductor (the next rank) regardless of the high quality of his performance.

Respectfully submitted,  
Henry T. Hunt  
Attorney for Petitioner,  
100 East 42nd Street,  
New York City.

Donald R. Richberg,  
Chicago, Ill.,  
of Counsel.

October 20, 1927.

B.S.C.P. Brief on Motion to Dismiss, Interstate Commerce Commission Case #20,007, ICC Files.

## 28. PRESS OPINION ON PORTERS' CASE

"Abolish Tipping, Yes--But"  
*Editorial from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has asked the Interstate Commerce Commission to investigate, with a new to raising wages and abolishing tipping. The Brotherhood, it is said, does not speak for all the porters, but for most.

The public is quite willing that wages should be fixed by any means agreeable to porters and employers. But it will not accept negotiation, mediation or arbitration of the great and glorious institution of tipping. The Interstate Commerce Commission may rule as it likes, but about tipping, the traveler will do as he has done; if pleased he will tip liberally and if displeased, or merely cranky, he will tip scantily or not at all.

The right to tip the Pullman porter is one of the few remaining vestiges of American freedom, not to be lightly cast aside. If the porters are determined to break up the practice they might try mixing up all the shoes for a change, instead of only some.



"Tipping"

*Editorial from a Pittsburgh (Pa.) daily paper reprinted  
in the Pittsburgh Courier*

The organized Pullman car porters are demanding a living wage and the elimination of tipping. We hope and pray that their demands be met.

A living wage is a necessity. Tipping is an unmitigated evil. Every worker should receive at least a living wage. Justice demands that he should get more, in order that he may put aside something for the day of adversity.

When a toiler's days of usefulness to his employer are ended, he should not be thrown to the wolves. In his years of activity he should be encouraged to make provision for old age, so that he will not become an object of charity. If a man's efforts are rewarded with only a living wage he cannot save anything.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has asked the Interstate Commerce Commission to take a hand in their controversy with the Pullman Company. The porters want their monthly wage increased from \$72.50 to \$150 and tipping abolished.

It is said that in fixing the wage the Pullman authorities take into consideration the amount received in tips from Pullman car patrons.

That is wrong in principle. It is an injustice to passengers and porters alike. When a traveler buys a railroad ticket and Pullman space and pays for the meals eaten on the diner, that is all that should be required of him. He is entitled to the necessary services performed by the train crew, including the duties of porters and waiters.

When the porter, the waiter or any other member of a passenger train crew starts out on his run he should know what he is to receive in dollars and cents for the services performed. This amount should be paid by the employers, not by the road's patrons.

If the railroad or the Pullman company has to increase the fare in order to pay a decent wage, let the fare be increased in the amount necessary. By this means the additional expense entailed will be equitably distributed among the patrons and each employe will get what is coming to him. At the outset both passengers and porters will know what to expect and can govern themselves accordingly.

We do not presume to say what the wages of a Pullman car porter should be. But we do say that they should be sufficient to enable the porter and his dependents to live comfortably and decently, and they should be paid by the company, not by the public.

There is good reason to believe that employers other than the Pullman officials, when fixing the amount of wages, take into consideration the sums received by their employes in tips. This should be done. If the patrons of various enterprises know that those who served them received a decent wage they would not feel called upon to scatter bounties recklessly about.

Not only is the tipping habit a nuisance to those who do the tipping, but it has a tendency to break down the self-respect of the person tipped. A man may serve in an humble capacity without feeling himself less than a man. But if circumstance forces him to lower himself to the position of a mendicant asking alms, his spirit is broken and by degrees he may find himself drifting into the class who become the wards of public charity.

Tipping is inimical to the best interests of all concerned. Let's be done with it.

Comment from "Headlines for Table Talk"  
Interstate Tattler, September 30, 1927

The Pullman Company refused to accept the invitation of the Mediation Board to discuss wages and working conditions with representatives of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. This is a reactionary and hard-boiled attitude, still we can understand and respect it. The Company is determined to fight to the last ditch to protect its interests. It is taking advantage of every technicality offered by the law and is prepared to exert all the brute force of its wealth and political prestige. The officials of the Company are not paying any attention to the piffle about the interests of the Company and the interests of the men being identical. They know that what is good for the Company is bad for its employees and what is good for its employees is bad for the Company. It is a plain case of conflicting

interests and they are doing their level best to see that the Company comes out on top. We do not see how any fair-minded person can censure them for that.

What we cannot understand is the continued protracted silence of the white Railroad Brotherhoods, who ought to be the natural allies of the porters. The only effective weapon left in the hands of the porters now is to create an emergency. Creating an emergency is a euphemism for calling a strike. We have our doubts whether the porters could win a strike. There is only one way to win a strike--by a concentration of force. The workers must be able to stop the machinery and to prevent other workers from operating it. The porters are too widely dispersed to do either. The Company would fill their places with scabs. Contraband porters could not gibe the traveling public efficient service but that would be the hard luck of Pullman passengers. In the meantime the striking porters would miss their pay and tips. Talk of justice to labor is all right and it gets a lot of applause but a man with installments due on the piano is not going to remain on strike very long.

While it is doubtful if the porters alone could win a strike the Company will listen to reason quickly enough if the white Brotherhoods take a sincere and manly attitude. They have only to declare their unwillingness to co-operate with scab labor and the Pullman Company will come down off its high horse. We are aware that the white Brotherhoods are not employees of the Pullman Company, and that fact, as we see it, would make their refusal to work with scab porters all the more effective. The public must travel. If a union train crew should refuse to take a Pullman car out because it was manned with scabs all the passengers with really important business in hand would take passage in a day coach. The railroad would get the money and the Pullman Company would lose it. In the meantime, those scabs would be on the payroll. You can figure the rest out for yourself.

"Above the Law"

*Editorial from The Pittsburgh Courier, September 10th, 1927.*

The refusal of the Pullman Company to carry the dispute with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to the Arbitration Board as specified by the New Railway Labor Act, is admission on its part that it considers itself above the laws of the country. Every other railroad company in the country has accepted, without a single objection, the good offices of the governmental machinery for the settlement of disputes between employees and employers. There remains the Emergency Board, to be selected by the President when an emergency exists. The porters' organization is now working strenuously to get this board appointed and functioning on its case.

Strange to note, the Pullman Company, at the same time that it was refusing to arbitrate the differences with the porters' union, was arbitrating its dispute with the Pullman conductors! The latter organization is a very weak and dispensable one while the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has enrolled well over a majority of the Pullman porters and maids, who are as near indispensable as any workers can be. Having tried by every means within its power to prevent the organization of the porters into a union controlled by themselves, and miserably failed, the Pullman Company in its desperation even flaunts the government of the United States in an effort to keep from paying its largest group of employees a living wage. This is practically an admission of the fact that it has no case, and the gesture should hearten those porters of a more pessimistic turn of mind.

The porters and maids have been making an excellent fight. It has been a fight waged against great odds. Curiously enough, most of the opposition has come not from whites but from Negroes, a fact that is difficult for an intelligent, race-conscious Negro to understand. With the exception of one or two newspapers, nothing but commendation has come from white people in all walks of life. Whatever the final outcome of the struggle, the porters and maids should maintain the excellent fighting organization they have created. Every group of workers in the country should be organized. There is no other way to wield any influence or exercise any control over one's work. The Pullman Company can no more represent the porters and maids than a flea can represent a dog upon which it feeds. Any such contention is laughable and those who believe it are gullible, indeed.

"The Case of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters"  
*Editorial from Norfolk Journal and Guide, September 17, 1927*

After a study of the several letters exchanged between Vice-President L. S. Hungerford of the Pullman Company and the Hon. Edwin P. Morrow, member of the United States Mediation Board, and between General Organizer A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Mr. Morrow, along with the comment of Donald R. Richberg, general counsel for the Brotherhood in connection with the dispute between the Pullman Company and the Brotherhood, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that both moral and statutory law is on the side of the Brotherhood and against the Pullman Company. Mr. Morrow sought, as provided by law, to mediate the dispute between the company and the Brotherhood. Failing in this he attempted to induce the parties to the dispute to submit the matter to arbitration as provided by law. To this the Brotherhood consented, but the Pullman Company absolutely declined to enter into arbitration with the representatives of the Brotherhood, basing its refusal on the claim that no dispute exists between the company and its maids and porters. The status of the case so far is that the Pullman Company positively refuses to join issue with the Brotherhood, that is, the company declines to recognize this organization of its maids and porters.

The Mediation Board, through Mr. Morrow, has exhausted all legal and reasonable means to bring the Pullman Company and the Brotherhood together, thus that a dispute between it and the company does exist.

The position of the Pullman Company in this matter seems to be indefensible. The Mediation Board has on its own investigation determined that the Brotherhood represents a majority of the porters and maids and is thus entitled to a conference with the company on any grievance, and accordingly sought both mediation and arbitration in the dispute, failing because of the positive refusal of the Pullman Company to enter into any such conferences.

It is to be regretted that the company has taken this position. It harkens back to the days of capital and labor feuds of unpleasant memory. The majority of porters have the right through the Brotherhood to speak for all, and they have made certain demands that by all moral and legal dictates the company should mediate.

"The Pullman Porters' Flank Move"  
*Editorial from the Boston Chronicle, September 24th, 1927.*

Balked by the tactics of the Pullman Company which is seeking refuge in arbitrary prerogative rather than join in determination of a dispute according to merit, or lack of it, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, claiming the right to represent the Pullman porters in contractual relations of wages and rules with their employer, resorts to strategy.

The move, undreamed of and totally unexpected, is a formal request on the Federal Interstate Commerce Commission for investigation of Pullman rates for sleeping and parlor car service.

The Commerce Commission has jurisdiction over nearly everything financial appertaining to railroad operation--except salaries and wages of rail officials and employes. Recently the Commission refused to permit the banking house of Morgan to handle the New Haven stock sale on the ground that the million-dollar commission the bankers would get out of the sale should not come out of the property. The Commission cannot raise the porters' pay nor abolish "tips." It can, however, rule that \$5.00 is too much pay for a room without bath and privacy for one night on the Federal Express to Washington in view of the low nominal wage paid to the servant who chiefly renders the \$5.00 service.

The move of the Porters' Union is strategic--a flank attack on the Pullman Company's fat pocketbook; and if Pullman management becomes convinced of favorable action on the Union's request, by the Commission recognition of the Union by Pullman won't be long; after which conferences resulting in a higher wage structure and reasonable rules will shortly follow.

The Pullman Porters' flank attack is wonderfully potential.

"Pullman Porters Face Technicalities"  
*Colorful News Movies, September 24th, 1927.*

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has bearded the wages and hours

of service lion in his den by filing a petition with the Interstate Commerce Commission, a quasi-judicial tribunal, created by Congress February 4, 1887, for the purpose of regulating interstate Commerce by requiring all rates to be just and reasonable and prohibiting unjust discrimination and undue or unreasonable preference or advantage in transportation rates or facilities.

The act to Regulate Commerce has been amended several times, and the Commission has been given jurisdiction upon complaint, to determine and prescribe reasonable rates, regulations, and practices; and it is under this phase of jurisdiction, together with other technical clauses of common law that the Pullman Porters are braving the mysteries of the Commission's jurisdiction in an effort to secure a better wage and more equitable conditions of labor.

We laud the Pullman Porters for exhausting every device of law in their endeavor to raise the dignity of deluxe transportation service.

There have been several cases before the Commission which involved interstate commerce relating to complaints lodged by Negroes. (Most of them have been lost.) The porters' case, however, is the first Negro case which seeks to tie up to the scheme of Federal regulation of interstate commerce the idea of securing wage increases for a group of workmen. The situation is indeed a novel one, and one the outcome of which, under the guidance of astute and learned counsel, it is difficult to foresee.

Since we are first, last and always for Negro organization, wherever the Negro is dealt with as a separate group, we trust that the brethren of the rail may win their case.

In the face of cold, cold law, which prescribes the jurisdiction of the Commission as being limited principally to passengers and property, we confess that it is difficult for us to see just where Brother Randolph's organization gets off.

From the bottom of our soles, however, to the top of last summer's straw lid, we hope we are mistaken; and attorneys for the complainant, who know the case far better than we do, may find some legal loophole which will give the Commission jurisdiction to decide the porters' plea; and if they do, we are sure that the long fight for wage justice will have been won.

#### The Slave in the Pullman

*The following editorial is taken from "America, a Catholic Review of the Week," issue of October 1st, 1927. "America" is the leading American Catholic Weekly.*

The nearest thing to a slave observable in this country is the Pullman porter. He has the same color, to begin with, and to conclude, he toils under conditions that are not remarkably dissimilar.

The ante-bellum slave received no wage, but, as a rule, he was provided with enough food to keep him alive, and in fit condition. His modern counterpart, the Pullman porter, manages to extort a money-wage, but it is not a living-wage. Far from it. But for the generosity of the public, he would starve. About half his income is doled out by the Pullman Company, a corporation of enormous wealth, and the other half is carelessly tossed to him--or in some cases slowly given with unspeakable groanings of reluctance--by the traveling public.

The porters have presented their grievances to the Interstate Commerce Commission. They desire to work for a living, or rather, to receive a living in return for their work, and they dislike the plan of depending upon chance charity. They argue that their tips, which amount to about \$7,000,000 yearly, are in effect, a fixed charge on the public in excess of the rates allowed. Hence the practice of "tipping" constitutes a violation of the Federal law, and should be abolished. This done, the porters hope that public opinion will rally to their support, and force the Pullman Company to pay a living wage.

Whatever may be said of the legal and practical value of this argument, it is clear that the porters suffer from a real grievance. They have a right, founded on the natural law, and taking precedence of the right of the Company to declare dividends, to receive a living wage in return for their services. They do not get it. Unless they demean themselves as a mendicant class, they run grave risk of malnutrition.

It seems to us that a corporation which deliberately pays an insufficient wage, and cadges on the public to increase that wage, is a public nuisance. Further, a corporation which fosters the creation of a menial and mendicant class is contrary to public policy.

Two marvelous improvements have made their appearance in the Pullman care in the last twenty-five years. One is a separate curtain for the upper berth, and the other is a slot for discarded razor-blades. Apart from these alterations, the interior of the Pullman is much the same as it was at the time of the Buffalo Exposition. In other respects, too, the company shows an unwillingness to change, and the chief of these is a reluctance to yield to humanitarian ideals. Should it evince a willingness to revise its wage-scale upward in favor of the porters, the public will overlook its rooted conservatism in other less important details. Humanity comes first.

*The Messenger*, 9 (November, 1927): 337-38.

29. THE TRADE UNION COMMITTEE  
To Aid  
THE PULLMAN PORTERS UNION

Frank R. Crosswaith, Secretary  
2311 Seventh Avenue  
New York, N.Y.

January 4, 1928

Dear Friends and Brothers:

The backs of the Pullman porters are against the wall. The Pullman Company is desperately trying to jam its criminal "Company Union" down their throats. Their struggle is our struggle. Race and color should not count. If they fail, we fail. In more than two years they have struggled alone, relying upon their own strength and resources. They must receive now some active support from labor; hence this appeal.

The porters' case before the U.S. Mediation Board and the Interstate Commerce Commission is most expensive. The Brotherhood must bear the same heavy financial burden as other transportation labor organizations, many of which are as much as a quarter of a century old, with unlimited financial resources. It is estimated that they need immediately \$25,000. They have overcome all other obstacles but their financial one. A majority of the porters realize full well that the lifting of their heavy economic burden depends upon the success of their union, but they haven't as yet gotten the habit of paying dues promptly. It is this financial difficulty that prevents them from getting official recognition and the establishment of their union on a sound basis. The success of their efforts will mean power to organized labor. Negro workers in every other industry will be encouraged into joining the union of their trade.

Conscious of the tremendous importance of the porters' struggle to labor generally, the above listed unions have come together to aid them; and we hereby ask that you give this appeal the immediate liberal support it so truly deserves.

Fraternally yours,

Thomas J. Curtis, Chairman  
A. I. Shiplacoff, Treasurer  
Frank R. Crosswaith, Secretary

THE UNITED HEBREW TRADES Heartily endorses this appeal and asks for it the unstinted support of organized labor. M. Feinstone, Secretary.<sup>55</sup>

Make checks to A. I. Shiplacoff, Treas., and mail to above address.

International Fur Workers' Union Archives.

## 30. OUR NEXT STEP

By A. Philip Randolph  
*General Organizer, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*

Dear Brethren:

The question comes from every corner: What is our next step? Our next step is to fight with redoubled determination. The decision of the Interstate Commerce Commission does not daunt the Brotherhood. Three of the commissioners stated that our case was within the jurisdiction of the Commission. This shows that the decision of the Commission is open to grave doubt as to its legality. The Brotherhood has the right under the law to appeal from the decision of the Commission just as many railroads do from time to time. We also have a right to reopen the case, if we so desire.

But our immediate program is to proceed with the creation of an emergency, which will require the United States Mediation Board to step in, survey the situation and recommend to the President of the United States that he appoint an Emergency Board to investigate the entire dispute with a view to settling same. Ours shall be the first complete and supreme test of the Railway Labor Act. No other group of railway employees have been compelled to invoke the Emergency Board, since the railroad companies have settled their disputes with their employees either through mediation or arbitration. The Pullman Company is the one outstanding case of a railway employer who has flagrantly defied the United States Mediation Board in refusing to abide by and obey its recommendations to arbitrate the dispute with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

The first step in creating the emergency is the taking of a strike vote.

*The Meaning of a Strike Vote*

By a strike vote is meant the indication on a strike ballot that Pullman porters are determined to strike if need be to secure their rights and win their demands.

A strike vote IS NOT A STRIKE. It is a sign of the iron resolution of the men to fight to the finish for their rights. It does not follow that Pullman porters will strike because they take a strike vote. The Telegraphers Union on the Burlington Railroad took a strike vote but did not strike. The United States Mediation Board stepped in and effected a settlement. The Train Conductors, Engineers, Enginemen and Firemen, in fact every union of railway employees has, at some time, taken strike votes without striking. But the strike vote expresses the strength of the Organization which will bring the Company around.

*Pullman Company Will Not See Strike Ballot*

Be assured that the Pullman Company will not see a single strike ballot signed by a single porter. All strike ballots will be reviewed and investigated by the United States Mediation Board in order to determine what per cent of the members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters are willing to go all the way with the Organization to achieve its demands. The strike vote which shall be prepared and sent from the National Headquarters in New York to Division Headquarters in the respective districts. There is no more reason for a porter to have any fear in signing a strike ballot than in signing an application blank or an affidavit of intimidation.

The Company does not think that the porters will stand up under fire. But the Brotherhood will prove to the Company that it has misjudged the porters again, that it is being misled by its Negro stool-pigeons. Some porters who have never paid any dues are rallying to the Brotherhood. Porters formerly opposed to the Organization are joining. The spirit is higher than ever. Our slogan that a winner never quits and a quitter never wins is cherished and revered now more than ever before. Men are willing to answer every call. Men are willing to march when the order is given. Men are willing to sacrifice to the limit. And this is as it should be, for the porters have gone too far to think about turning back or giving up. To turn

back means to accept the despicable stigma of a "quitter" and to invite the most brutal and inhuman treatment from the Company in the future, for if the porters do not stick to the Brotherhood their lot will be worse than that of a dog's with the Company, since the Company will assume that if they haven't the guts to organize and stick, they are not entitled to a man's chance, a man's treatment. And the Company would be right.

Happily there are porters with that fighting, militant and determined spirit who are willing to carry on until victory is won. Nothing can daunt them, nothing can halt their march. This is the new Pullman porter, and he represents the new spirit of the New Negro.

*The Messenger*, 10 (April, 1928): 90-91.

### 31. PULLMAN PORTERS WIN POT OF GOLD

By G. James Fleming

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## Content removed at rightsholder's request.

*The Crisis*, 44 (November, 1937): 332-38, 346-47.

### THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS AT AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR CONVENTIONS

32. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, OCTOBER 4, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

It has come to my attention that propaganda has been circulated to the effect that the American Federation of Labor has turned down the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters three different times and won't permit us to join. I wish you to inform the men that this is not true. The action on the application of the Brotherhood for an International Charter in the American Federation of Labor has simply been postponed at different times. The reason for this is that our application for a charter is involved in a jurisdictional dispute. By this I mean that the International Hotel and Restaurant Employees Alliance and the International Bartenders League claims jurisdiction over the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters on the grounds that a Pullman car is a hotel on wheels. My appearances before the Executive Council of the Federation have been for the purpose of breaking down this condition, and I think we have about done that. I am appearing before the Council again on October 19th on this same question.

Now, if we wanted to go into the Federation on any terms, we could have been in the American Federation of Labor two years ago. It wants us to come in immediately, but we are holding out for an International Charter, because it will give us more voice, more power and a higher standing in the Federation. If we go in under the International Hotel and Restaurant Employees Alliance and International Bartenders League, this Organization will speak for us, and we will have no voice. Therefore, our not being in the Federation is result of our own choice.

I want to urge that you push the Questionnaire Ballots and advise the men definitely that the instructions and orders of the Policy Committee and the General Organizer are NOT TO VOTE IN THE EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATION PLAN ELECTIONS.

I hope this explanation is clear so that you will be able to inform the men and any of the public that you think advisable.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer.

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

## 33. 1933 CONVENTION

Demand That the Pullman Company Be Included Under the <sup>56</sup>  
Emergency Railroad Transportation Act 1933

Resolution No. 86--By Delegate A. Philip Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters' Union, No. 18068

WHEREAS, The Pullman Company is claiming and boasting to its employes that it is not subject to regulation by the National Recovery Act or the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act, 1933, and hence may continue to maintain its Plan of Employee Representation or Company Union; and

WHEREAS, The Coordinator of Federal Transportation, in reply to request by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to investigate the Pullman Company Union, stated that the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act does not apply to the Pullman Company; and

WHEREAS, The Coordinator, Honorable Joseph B. Eastman, in a letter to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters under the date of September 25, states: "The fact is that the Pullman Company is not subject to the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act, 1933" . . . and adds "The failure to include the Pullman Company no doubt may be due to an oversight but that does not change the fact;"<sup>57</sup> and

WHEREAS, Sec. 3 of the Interstate Commerce Act, states: "The term 'common carrier' as used in this act shall include all pipe line companies; telegraph, telephone, and cable companies operating by wire or wireless; express companies, sleeping car companies and all persons natural or artificial engaged in such transportation or transmission as aforesaid as common carriers for hire . . . ;" and

WHEREAS, The Railway Labor Act states in Sec. 1, First, The term "Carrier" includes any express company, sleeping car company, and any carrier by railroad subject to the Interstate Commerce Act; and

WHEREAS, Under Title 1, Emergency Powers of the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act, 1933, the Federal Coordinator of Transportation is moving to determine wherein railway carriers are violating Labor's rights in the above named act, through a questionnaire sent the carriers, in which it is said: "It is now unlawful for any railroad to:

- (1) Deny or in any way question the right of its employes to join the Labor Organization of their choice.
- (2) Interfere in any way with the organization of its employes.
- (3) Use its funds in maintaining so-called company unions.
- (4) Influence or coerce its employes in an effort to induce them to join or remain members of such company unions"; and

WHEREAS, In President Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act, the general policy of the nation is herein expressed against workers being forced to join company unions and labor is granted the untrammelled right of self-organization and the designation of their representatives free from interference, restraint or coercion of employers of labor; and

WHEREAS, The Pullman Company has violated and is now violating the Railway Labor Act, the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act, 1933, and the spirit and letter of the N.R.A., by maintaining with its funds a company union, and firing porters and maids for joining the Sleeping Car Porters' Unions which embrace the large majority of the porters and maids in the Pullman service; be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor in its 53d annual convention held in Washington, D.C., instructs and urges the Executive Council to use its good offices in calling upon President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue an Executive Order interpreting the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act, 1933, to include within its scope sleeping car companies, thereby correcting a situation that results in the Pullman Company occupying a favored status; be it further

RESOLVED, That the convention herewith condemn the policy of oppression and exploitation of porters and maids by the Pullman Company through low wage rates and the chain ganging of runs from four hundred to five hundred a month, a policy which is in direct contravention of the spirit of the National Recovery Program.

Your committee recommends adoption of Resolution No. 86.

Delegate Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters: Mr. President and delegates: Before speaking on the resolution I want to express on behalf of the officers and members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, our sincere appreciation for the action of the Cincinnati convention in granting both financial and moral support to our organization in our fight to eliminate the company unions through an injunction proceeding. I may say our injunction trial took place June 26 and 27 in New York, and that the decision is now pending. We expect that it will be handed down at any time.

Now I want to say a word about this resolution, inasmuch as it not only affects Pullman porters and maids, but the Pullman conductors.

There are two major pieces of legislation that have been enacted, the National Recovery Act and the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act. These two pieces of legislation arose out of similar conditions, namely, economic confusion. We had banks going out of business, factories closing down, and there was widespread unemployment. The two pieces of legislation are calculated to increase re-employment through raising wages and by reducing the hours of work. It is inconceivable that any corporation would be excluded from the supervision of either one of these pieces of legislation, but to the amazement of the Pullman porters and maids and Pullman conductors, the Pullman Company sets up a claim that it does not come under either the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act or the National Recovery Act. In other words, the Pullman Company claims it is entirely outside the law, and consequently it can maintain the company union it now has. It is a strange unprecedented and extraordinary situation. I want to read from the Interstate Commerce Act a provision with regard to the relation between carriers and their employees.

"First, the term 'carriers' includes any express company, sleeping car company, and any carrier by railroads subject to the Interstate Commerce Act, including all floating equipment, such as boats, barges, tugs, bridges and ferries; and other transportation facilities used by or operated in connection with any such carrier by railroads, and any receiver or any other individual or body, judicial or otherwise, when in the position of the business of employers or carriers covered by this Act."

They use the term "common carriers," and here you have the very name, "sleeping car company," designed in the Interstate Commerce Act. The Pullman Company sets up the grounds that it does not come under the jurisdiction of the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act because sleeping cars are not definitely designated. The Act itself simply states that the term "carriers" means any common carrier by railroads subject to the provisions of the Interstate Commerce Act.

Now the Interstate Commerce Act definitely designated the sleeping car companies and says that wherever the term "common carriers" is used that sleeping car companies and express companies shall come under its provisions.

Now, President Roosevelt, in writing a letter to President Whitney of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, makes this statement in his letter, and it bears on the question here involved:

"On August 16 you wrote the Coordinator furnishing him a copy of the document above mentioned, entitled 'Evidence of Expenditures of Railroad Funds to Coerce Employees and Maintain Company Unions,' and asked him 'to promptly review the information submitted and thereafter to take such action or make such order as may be necessary to cause the law to be complied with in this respect.' The information submitted is voluminous and relates to many different carriers. The Coordinator has not at his command a force of investigators sufficient to cover all of these grounds by direct examination of records. He plans, therefore, to send a questionnaire to be answered under oath to all carriers by railroads where so-called company unions exist, covering each and every one of the practices alleged in your communication, and asking in detail whether or not such practice is or has been in effect. The questionnaire will be supplemented, if found practicable, by test examinations of records in typical cases through commission investigators. To the extent that such practices are admitted, or are otherwise found to exist, the carriers will be given an opportunity to make a legal defense in the form of

a brief if they so desire. If important legal questions are raised in such briefs, the labor organizations which you represent will be given an opportunity to present their views upon such questions. By the information finally developed the Coordinator's actions will be governed. Every effort will be made to expedite this inquiry."

Now, in this communication President Roosevelt definitely says that this questionnaire is to be sent to all carriers by railroads. Now, the term "railroads," according to the Interstate Commerce Act, simply is designated to make a distinction between carriers by water and carriers by rail. It seems from the letter that President Roosevelt meant it should include all the employees under any kind of transportation company whatever. It seems to me it is clear that President Roosevelt, with his fine, constructive and splendid vision would certainly not permit the Pullman Company, which is one of the most arrogant open shop companies in America, to be without regulation, either under the National Recovery Act or the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act.

Right after this questionnaire was sent out by Mr. Eastman the Pullman Company answered our letter for the first time in the last eight years, but the company contends it has no dispute with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, because it has a contract with the Pullman porters and maids in the company union. It says that it intends to adhere to that procedure.

Our organization feels that that is a very definite violation of the law. Just before the Pullman Company sent that letter to us it had sent a communication to the officers of the company unions in which it called upon those officers to report to the supervising officers of their districts and receive funds for the purpose of attending a company union meeting in which they were to sign an agreement to maintain the reduction in pay of Pullman porters and maids to June, 1934.

We contend that the Pullman porters and maids, and also the Pullman conductors and all the employees of the Pullman Company, come under the Emergency Railroad Transportation Act. We do not want to be divorced from the railroad group, inasmuch as Mr. Eastman is going to recommend legislation for the permanent government of transportation. In Mr. Eastman's mind there is an idea that the porters ought to be covered in this Emergency Railroad Transportation Act. It seems to me, merely because sleeping car companies are not definitely designated in the Act, there is no reason why the Pullman Company should not be included, because under the Act for control of carriers the sleeping car company was not designated but the Pullman Company was affected.

We are calling upon President Green to work with our organization. Of course he has already indicated that he would, as he always does, to the end of getting the President to take some action in order that the sleeping car company shall be included in this Act. If that is not done the Pullman Company will violate all the terms of this Emergency Legislation.

Pullman porters are now getting \$72.50 a month, and yet before the Industrial Relations Commission which was set up by President Wilson, Mr. Robert Todd Lincoln, who was then President of the Pullman Company, testified that a good porter will make good tips. In these days of depression, when travel is light, the tips have gone down 75 per cent. Furthermore our organization is opposed to the tipping system. We believe the porter ought to receive a definite living wage. Nevertheless, if the Pullman Company can prevent the porters from organizing, the porters will be unable to collectively bargain for bettering their conditions. Out of this \$72.50 a month the Pullman porters are required to pay \$33.00 a month as occupational expenses.

The Pullman porter has to pay for the polish which he uses on your shoes, he has to buy two uniforms a year and pay for food in transit. We had the Labor Board of New York make an investigation. They secured information indicating that the Pullman porters pays out \$33.00 a month in order to be a porter. Now that is a rather large amount of money to come out of the small wages of the Pullman porter, plus the tips that are now practically inconsequential. The Pullman Company is setting up the claim now that it cannot make any drastic change in its policy. It says the company cannot afford it. Nevertheless the Pullman Company boasts that it has never passed a dividend. Other companies have not been so fortunate. The Pullman Company has no funded indebtedness. The Pullman Company does not pay any wage to the Pullman porter and the Pullman Company expects the public to pay them.

In 1925 to 1929 an investigation revealed that the public was paying to the Pullman Company in tips alone \$8,540,000 a year. Now, nominally, these tips were received by the porters, but actually they went to the Pullman Company, because by virtue of the tips the Pullman Company could set the wage that would be very much lower than if the porters did not receive tips. Morgan, Vanderbilt and Mellon, who are on the Board of Directors of the Pullman Company, are receiving the benefit of these tips. We want a definite wage, we want a 240-hour work month. If we get the 240-hour work month it will enable a great many of the men on furloughs to get jobs.

We hope this resolution will be effective and instrumental in getting some action that will change the status of the Pullman porters, the Pullman maids, the Pullman conductors, and express workers. None of them know where they stand, they do not know whether they come under the Emergency Railroad Act or the National Recovery Act. We want to know what piece of legislation has jurisdiction over our employees. We will not permit the company to get from under both pieces of legislation. Before we do that, the Pullman porters and maids will walk off the cars. We cannot claim that we have any kind of constructive, enduring industrial peace unless that industrial peace rests upon industrial justice. Certainly it is not just if the Pullman porters are excluded from all these pieces of legislation.

The report of the committee was unanimously adopted.

*Proceedings* of the 53rd annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1933, pp. 193-94, 519-23.

#### 34. 1934 CONVENTION

##### Requesting International Charter for Sleeping Car Porters

Resolution No. 144--By Delegate A. Philip Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters No. 18068.

WHEREAS, The Sleeping Car Porters have functioned, since they were organized in 1925, through the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, international in scope, though affiliated with the American Federation of Labor under Federal charters since 1929; and

WHEREAS, The Pullman Company is an international corporation which operates its sleeping cars in Mexico and Canada; and

WHEREAS, There are now thirteen Federal Locals of Sleeping Car Porters affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, with ten or more sleeping car locals in preparation for affiliation as Federal locals, which fully satisfies the conditions and requirements for an International charter; and

WHEREAS, The Railway Labor Act, as amended by the Seventy-third Congress, specifically states under the general caption: National Board of Adjustment--Grievances--Interpretation of Agreements, Section 3, paragraph (a), "That the said Adjustment Board shall consist of thirty-six members, eighteen of whom shall be selected by the carriers and eighteen by such labor organizations of employees, national in scope, as have been or may be organized in accordance with the provisions of Section 2 of this Act," and renders it imperative that railway workers, in order to function effectively in bargaining collectively in the negotiations of agreements concerning rates of pay and rules governing working conditions, be embraced in an organization national in structure and scope; and

WHEREAS, The tax of Federal locals is too heavy a burden upon the Sleeping Car Porters to permit them adequately to handle the grievances and represent Sleeping Car Porters that are located in Pullman districts, extending from Miami, Florida, to the twin cities of Minnesota and from New York City to California; and

WHEREAS, The only sound structure of organization of Sleeping Car Porters is one which is co-extensive with the industry in which they are employed and the corporation with which it must fight for the right of self-organization and the selection and designation of representatives of their own choosing; and

WHEREAS, Since the passage of the Railway Labor Act, as amended by the Seventy-third Congress, five or six thousand sleeping car porters and maids have joined the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, representing the large majority of the porters and maids in the sleeping car industry; and

WHEREAS, The sleeping car porters will soon institute action, through the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, to secure a conference with the Pullman Company, to make and maintain an agreement on wages, hours and rules governing working conditions; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That in view of the aforementioned facts and reasons of the Fifty-fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, in San Francisco assembled, herewith grant an international charter to the Sleeping Car Porters, the same to include within its scope of jurisdiction the red-caps, ushers and train porters.

As the subject matter of this resolution requires administrative action, your committee recommends that the resolution be referred to the Executive Council for their earnest consideration.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report of the committee.

Delegate Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters' Union No. 18068: Mr. Chairman and delegates of the Fifty-fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor--The Application of the Sleeping Car Porters for an International charter is based upon several grounds. First, the Pullman company for which the Sleeping Car Porters work is a corporation which conducts its business on an international scale operating sleeping cars in Mexico, Canada and the United States of America.

Second: Federal unions in an industry where the workers are unified on a national scale tend to increase and foster a psychology of isolation and separation. This tends to prevent these workers from building up economic strength.

Third: Federal unions require taxation which is too heavy for the Sleeping Car Porters to bear in view of the fact that the Sleeping Car Porters are now operating under a national labor organization. When the Sleeping Car Porters went into the American Federation of Labor in 1929 they then had a national labor organization. We could not unscramble that national labor organization, therefore we had to bear the expense incident to operating a national organization. At the same time we had the official relationship with the American Federation of Labor of Federal unions.

Fourth: The amendment to the Railway Labor Act by the Seventy-third Congress requires that railroad workers, in order that they may effectively deal with the employers, must function through national labor organizations. Permit me to read one section of the Act under the general caption, "National Board of Adjustments, Grievances, Interpretation of Agreements, Paragraph A:

"That the Special Adjustment Board shall consist of thirty-six members, eighteen of whom shall be selected by the carriers and eighteen by such labor organizations of the employees national in scope as have been or may be organized in accordance with Section 2 of this Act."

Therefore, you see, delegates, that railroad workers, in order that they may function effectively in building economic strength, in order that they may collectively bargain with the railroad company, must have a structure that is national in scope.

Fifth: The Sleeping Car Porters have now thirteen Federal unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. We have the required number on which you can build an International labor organization.

Sixth: The Sleeping Car Porters are prepared and ready to pay taxes on five thousand sleeping car porters, bona fide members that we have organized. Federal unions could not have organized five thousand sleeping car porters, but we were functioning through a national labor organization and consequently we were able to organize that number. In the next thirty days we will be able to organize ninety to ninety-five per cent of the sleeping car porters of the Pullman Company.

Consequently we qualify in every respect for an International charter in terms of numbers of Federal locals, in terms of bonafide members, in terms of ability to pay the per capita tax, in terms of financial ability to operate an International organization.

Now, the Sleeping Car Porters have made application to the Executive Council for an International charter several times before. The first application was turned down on the ground that the International Hotel and Restau-



rant Employees Alliance claimed jurisdiction over the Sleeping Car Porters. I shall not comment on that jurisdictional claim because of the fact that the Executive Council refused to give over the Sleeping Car Porters to the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance.

The second application which was made to the Executive Council was turned down on the ground that we did not have enough bonafide members and were not financially able to operate and conduct an International labor organization. However, that position is now changed in view of the fact that we have organized over five thousand members and are qualified to operate and conduct an International labor organization.

We made a third application for an International charter to the Executive Council. No action has been taken on this third application. However, the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors has also made application to the Executive Council for jurisdiction over the Sleeping Car Porters. Now just a word about that claim. The claim of the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors for jurisdiction over the Sleeping Car Porters is based upon the ground that there are porters who work in charge, operate sleeping cars in charge; that is to say that they do conductor's work and receive a differential in pay over the standard sleeping car porter of about \$13.

In connection with that position may I say that there are probably not three hundred sleeping car porters who operate in charge, and even the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors recognizes the policy of the Pullman Company to use sleeping car porters as "in charge porters," because the agreement of the Sleeping Car Conductors says that where there are two or more sleeping cars the sleeping car conductor shall be in charge. The implication is that where there is one car a sleeping car porter may operate "in charge." A sleeping car porter who operates "in charge" is not operating in charge all the time. He may operate "in charge" one month and then may be removed and work on a standard sleeping car as a full-fledged porter. Moreover I don't think you will find fifty porters in the country who operate "in charge" over two or more cars. In other words, the sleeping car porters who operate "in charge" are operating on one car, and the agreement of the Order of Sleeping Car Porters recognizes that policy of the Pullman Company. Before the existence of Sleeping Car Conductors the sleeping car porters worked "in charge." They have worked "in charge" since the organization of the Sleeping Car Conductors. Therefore, this point on the part of the organization in claiming jurisdiction over the Sleeping Car Porters is unsound inasmuch as sleeping car porters are not responsible for working "in charge." The Pullman Company assigns them to that work and therefore there is nothing that can be done about it.

As a matter of fact, it is simply a change in the economic and industrial conditions of the Pullman porters and the Pullman conductors. May I say in this connection that the Sleeping Car Porters have absolutely nothing against the Sleeping Car Conductors. As a matter of fact the Sleeping Car Porters are interested in the Sleeping Car Conductors holding their jobs and the Sleeping Car Porters will co-operate with them in helping them to hold their jobs so far as possible. However, the Sleeping Car Porters have spent over a quarter of a million dollars during a period of nine years to organize five thousand or more men into a legitimate, bona fide labor organization, and the Sleeping Car Porters feel that they are entitled to national and international charters with control over their own affairs and they feel that they are competent in terms of ability, of character and of vision to operate such an organization.

We also feel the delegates to this convention would certainly be in favor of a group of men who have fought and suffered and sacrificed for nine years to build up an organization, that they would be in favor of these men conducting their own international organization. May I say that during this period over five hundred Pullman porters have lost their jobs. Consequently you can readily see that a very definite sacrifice has been made to build up this organization. Now this historic convention has established some precedents. In other words, it has broken a precedent in enlarging the Executive Council, which is constructive and fundamental. It has also taken a position on industrial unionism, which is another fine and far-reaching and significant position. It ought to take another position and to break another precedent in awarding the first international charter to an organization composed of Negro workers. This organization is the first one that has made application to the American Federation of Labor for an international charter. Therefore, it would

be not a mere gesture, but it would be something fundamental for the Executive Council to award an international charter to this organization, inasmuch as the Sleeping Car Porters qualify in every particular and in every way in order to receive such a charter.

President Green is familiar with the struggle of this group. He has spoken in public meetings for our organization in New York and Chicago. He knows what the group has gone through. He knows what it has borne, the or-- deals the movement has endured, consequently I am confident that this Federation will be appreciative of the progress that this movement will make if it is granted an international charter.

Now we are going to enter a letter to the Pullman Company in the next few days for a conference for the purpose of discussing an agreement concerning rates of pay and rules governing working conditions. We are going to do that whether we get an international charter or not. In other words, we have more than 70 per cent of the sleeping car porters in the Pullman service. Therefore, we are qualified under the law to get a conference with the Pullman Company. We are confident that we will be able to get an agreement. However, we would be far more effective in presenting our case if when we went for this conference with the Pullman Company we had an international charter from the American Federation of Labor. It would give a splendid moral effect to the whole effort that would be made on the part of our organization.

May I say also that even if the Executive Council awarded the Sleeping Car Porters to the Conductors, it is very doubtful if the Sleeping Car Conductors would get one porter. The porters would not submit to the jurisdiction and the reason is that the Sleeping Car Conductors have never made any effort to organize the porters. Moreover, there is, unfortunately, in the constitution of the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors, a color clause. That naturally creates a psychology which will cause the Sleeping Car Porters not to be favorable to placing their destinies in the hands of an organization that has a color clause in its constitution. These are facts that cannot be ignored and consequently, in conclusion, I want to appeal to the Executive Council that it award the Sleeping Car Porters an international charter, and, if that is done, the Sleeping Car Porters will be an organization which will be an asset and a credit and a contribution to the labor movement of America.

Of course I know the procedure on international charters and the awarding of charters of any sort by the Executive Council, inasmuch as the Executive Council has to delineate the lines of jurisdiction. Consequently, I am not arguing for a change in the recommendation of the committee.

Delegate Warfield, Sleeping Car Conductors: Mr. Chairman and delegates to the convention--The remarks made by Delegate Randolph being in a way in support of the committee's report, make my position here a little easier. Of course I am speaking in favor of the committee's report. I only want to say a few words to clarify the issues. Delegate Randolph has unwittingly, no doubt, made some statements that are not quite in accordance with the facts, and I want you to have the facts. He said that the contract that we hold with the company recognizes the proposition of operating porters "in charge" by having a rule providing that where two or more cars are operated then there will be a conductor, which is an inference that when there is only one car the porter may be the operator. We have no such rule. We have not been able to stop the operation of porters "in charge." That is something that has come about recently. Of course for many years porters have operated on short parlor runs, but they were never operated in place of conductors. We took no exception to that practice, but in the later years, particularly since the beginning of the depression, the Pullman Company has changed its policy so that now porters are being substituted for conductors in many cases. There are probably five hundred operating at the present time, and every porter is required to familiarize himself with the duties of a conductor in order to hold his position as a porter.

We are not depriving the porters of an organization, we are offering them one, an international organization that will give them all the benefits that we have ourselves. He says there is a clause in our constitution about the color line. The clause to which he refers merely conforms with the requirements of the company for conductors. Only white men are eligible for the work of conductors. But the reason we have asked for jurisdiction over porters is this: on account of the constantly increasing number of porters taking the places of conductors we are faced with extinction of our class of

service unless something is done. But we do not propose to stop that practice for that reason. What we do propose is to take jurisdiction over the porters so that it will prevent dual representation.

If the porters were to secure an international charter we would have the impossible situation of two international organizations within one company, both of them trying to write rules governing wages and working conditions for employes in the same class of service. So in order to make things operate more smoothly we have asked for this jurisdiction.

I want to say further that Delegate Randolph was wrong in saying we had never made any effort to organize the porters. We did make an effort back in 1919, but we were prevented from perfecting that organization on account of the jurisdiction claims by the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Association, so we had to drop it for the time being. We have never ceased our efforts to help these men organize, but the time has come when if we do not have jurisdiction over the porters we are going to have an impossible situation when it comes to writing rules governing wages and working conditions, because the two organizations trying to do the same thing for different classes of employes are bound to have friction. There can be nothing else.

Since Delegate Randolph has been willing to submit this to the Executive Council, I have no further remarks to make and I am willing that he and I should go before the Executive Council to straighten this thing out.

I thank you.

The report of the Committee on resolution No. 144 was adopted by unanimous vote.

*Proceedings* of the 54th annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1934, pp. 704-08.

#### SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN A. PHILIP RANDOLPH AND MILTON P. WEBSTER

##### 35. MILTON P. WEBSTER TO A. PHILIP RANDOLPH, MARCH 15, 1928

Dear Brother Randolph:

I was not altogether surprised at an adverse decision from the Interstate Commerce Commission, and to some extent, I had the Chicago men prepared for an adverse decision. While on the face of the arguments before the Commission we apparently had the best of it; yet I have found that those government bodies are strong on following precedent and since this was the first time a case of this sort had been presented to it, we could not, with any reason of certainty, anticipate which way they were going to decide. However, since the case has been dismissed, we might as well forget about that angle of it and go ahead and prosecute the other part of the program.

The spirit here is unusually high. I had just sent out a notice to the membership to attend a special series of meetings and fortunately the letters were all delivered the morning after the decision was rendered. The house has been crowded to capacity every night since. For the first time in a long while we have had to take down the petition. The men are determined to stick, and we have taken in five new members in Chicago since the decision was rendered. I think that is an indication of how the Chicago men feel.

Brother Bradley writes me that the men have taken on a new life in St. Louis since the decision of the Commission. And I believe the men are determined to carry on a finished fight.

The Daily News wrote a very favorable editorial on the matter suggesting that we might apply to the Federal Trade Commission for relief. I talked to the man who wrote the editorial and gave him the procedure over the telephone. He got it a little twisted, however, I think it served the purpose.

I might suggest that it is my opinion that we must pursue a very vigorous program from now on. The enthusiasm seems to be higher than it has been for some time and I think the situation demands action. I don't believe that we can hold the membership over another long wait and only through keeping things active and going, can we keep up the interest. I believe that we should immediately proceed to create the emergency, but, however I am of the opinion that the program should be definitely planned so that there will be no misconception on the part of anybody upon whom the duty is dependent to carry the plan out. It might be well to confine the actual directing of the taking of the strike vote to just a few men, say three or four. They would have definite instructions, thoroughly understand what was to be done and direct everybody in those territories to that man and in that way you would avoid any confusion incidental to the misinterpretation of the letter being sent out to the membership.

I believe that we should get at this matter forthwith, and so plan the taking of the vote that it will be completed at least within fifteen days of June first. I would like to hear from you at once as to what your plans are on the matter.

Relative to suggestion of your letter of the 7th of raising finance through the churches, I believe it is almost an impossibility in Chicago. Other means will have to be provided. I will arrange to make those talks over the radio as soon as I can get time. And also plan to hold a meeting under the auspices of the Citizens Committee. To be frank, I don't think many of them are going to look with much favor on this strike proposition. However, I will call them together at an early date and sound them out on the matter.

Bennie Smith is already in Pittsburgh and we have several of our hard-boiled members running into Pittsburgh and I believe that he is going to be able to get things whipped up in good shape there.

As soon as I can get a full committee meeting together, I will advise on my plan for raising funds.

I am invited to the Y.M.C.A. here, Saturday afternoon at a luncheon, as a member of this Co-operation Committee that is to hold this Interracial Conference here. I will be glad to meet Mr. Arthur face to face.

I note your reference to retrenchment. And I would like to suggest that I do not believe it will be advisable to eliminate Brother Darby in Jacksonville at this particular time. It would mean that we would not have anybody there at all to represent the Organization which would register a complete victory for the Company in that territory. Jacksonville men who run in here seem to be in pretty good spirits and have considerable confidence in Darby. I would suggest retrenchment in some other place where we could probably get along without a man much better than we could without one in Jacksonville.

Indications are that our dues income are about to pick up materially and get back to normal. I might also make another suggestion Brother Randolph, and that is in relation to retrenchments. We might as well take into consideration, the only permanent funds the Brotherhood has is from its dues; and whatever effort is being put forth, the most stress should be laid on educating the members up to paying their dues. To raise money from outside sources, no doubt, relieves the temporary situation, but we cannot depend upon the success of those attempts and consequently, I believe much better results will be obtained by directing more attention to the payment of dues, than on the other hand, in rearranging the financial program of the organization. I believe that whatever program is mapped out should seriously consider both the immediate income and that which we might naturally expect in the future.

I am firm in the belief that upon the Pullman porter lies the responsibility of financing this movement and that if we are not successful in educating him up to financing it, it is not going to be done by outsiders. We have an example in many attempts in trying to get the public to finance other movements which have far wider publicity than the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

The reaction of the men here on the decision from the Interstate Commerce Commission is very favorable to us and I am of the opinion that if we strike while the iron is hot, we will be able to register some material results.

I will keep you informed of any important developments.

Yours fraternally,

M. P. Webster,  
Chicago Division Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

36. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, MARCH 19, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

Supplementary to my previous letters, may I say that the program now is to speedily develop the morale of the men to the point where we can take a strike vote and get at least a ninety per cent response. Any less a response would represent a failure. The men must be informed of the fact that a strike vote is not a strike, nor does it necessarily mean that the porters will strike. But it does mean that the porters are determined to get their demands, and if necessary, strike for them. You may cite to them the fact that the Telegraphers took a strike vote on the Burlington, but did not strike. That every railroad union has taken a strike vote at some time, but that a strike did not always follow. We must, however, be ready for any contingency, for a show-down.

Also inform the men that no one will see the strike ballot except the United States Mediation Board. The Pullman Company will not have access to the ballots. They will be sent out by the Brotherhood and be wholly secret. Have them understand that the bigger response to the strike vote, the stronger the position of the Brotherhood with the Pullman Company, the United States Mediation Board and the Emergency Board. I am sending you outline of emergency plan. Now is the time for us to hit, and hit hard. We cannot lose, if the men stick, and the men will stick if they know the facts about the situation and the Organization keeps up an intensive drive.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

P.S. The leading Negroes of Chicago are bowing to the Brotherhood at last because of its power. You are right about Brother Darby of Jacksonville. He is still with us.

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

37. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, MARCH 24, 1928

Dear Brother:

Strike Ballots and Strike Vote Record Sheet are being sent you under separate cover.

May I request and urge that you have every member of the Organization and non-member to sign a Strike Ballot in his own handwriting, for each ballot will be carefully scrutinized by the United States Mediation Board.

Let us execute our Strike Vote Plan with great dispatch, the quicker the better, so that we will be able to get action from the United States Mediation Board in recommending to the President the establishment of an Emergency Board. Let us not permit anything to daunt us in this work. We must get the Ballots signed. The men must be shown that they must sign the

Ballots. A leaflet on WHY EVERY PORTER AND MAID SHOULD SIGN THE BALLOT will be sent you. Now is the time to hit and hit hard, for this is the decisive blow.

I would advise each and every porter and maid be given a thorough talk on the question. It means everything to win one man over completely, for he will win others.

Forward to victory.

Faternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

38. MILTON P. WEBSTER TO A. PHILIP RANDOLPH, MARCH 24, 1928

Dear Brother Randolph:

Things are moving along pretty good here this week. Meetings are very well attended and the men are anxious to get started on the strike ballots. I believe from all indications that we will be able to pull a good strike vote here in Chicago.

I received your outline of the zone matter and also the instructions relative to carrying out the strike program. We are already here, just awaiting the arrival of the ballots.

A newspaper writer connected with the Chicago Daily News has kept in constant touch with me and I have given him the entire history of the fight, as well as some of the preliminary steps that lead up or provoked the organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He apparently has been interviewing the other side also. The only thing concrete that I have been able to get so far is the fact that the Pullman Company is broadcasting the story that five thousand ex-Pullman porters have been hired to replace the porters that are going out on the strike.

Of course the story cannot be printed until such time as I can give him something that makes news. If you could give me some details in connection with Perry W. Howard, I think it could be used to our advantage, because I think if the news gives us a big story, the other newspapers will be clamoring for more details and I will be able to get pretty much all of our matter over in the big dailies in Chicago. This writer could not understand why more publicity was not given to the situation in Chicago. However, I think we will be able to get it over big.

The Chicago Whip continues to burlesque us under the direction of Harry Hull, but those attacks are absolutely harmless.

I am planning a large meeting just as soon as I can get the Citizens Committee together and sound them out on this matter of strike. I don't know how they are going to feel toward it. However, regardless of how they feel, I will pull the meeting anyhow. I will try to get some hardboiled labor leaders, as well as one or two prominent Negroes to talk on the program and put this strike proposition up to them in plain terms.

I have started out to raise some additional finance. It was a rather difficult proposition to get the committee to take action on it but they are all of the opinion that they would raise the finance in the same way they did before and I will advise from time to time how it is developing. Of course the first night we got a fairly generous response, however, since that time it has not been so good. In fact many of the men haven't any money and it is a physical impossibility to comply. However, we will do all that we possibly can to contribute a reasonably large sum.

I believe the enthusiasm of the men is higher now than it has ever been at any one time in our career. I don't believe it would insure to our benefit not to capitalize this enthusiasm to the utmost, as this is the last blow which must be effectively struck and I believe it can be done if we act immediately.

Reports from the western districts are very favorable and I think quick action will be able to accomplish some real results in creating a more co-operative spirit throughout the country.

I will keep in touch with you.

Yours fraternally,

M. P. Webster,  
Chicago Division Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

39. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, MARCH 26, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

The men are signing the strike ballots here in fine fashion. May I request that you don't permit a single porter to carry a ballot home with him, but require him to make it out then and there or not at all.

When you begin taking your strike vote, may I urge that you give an interview to every big daily in Chicago, giving them all of the facts about the Brotherhood from the beginning to the present time. I would call them up and surround it with an air of mystery and let them know that you will be in your office to be interviewed between certain hours. We ought to get big publicity out of this move.

As I see it, our job is to convince each and every man of the necessity and value of the strike vote, as he will convince others. The men simply must be made to sign the ballots, and I think they will, if the trend here is any indication.

I heard that the Company is hiring old men here also. That's supposed to be a scare for us. We are starting Brother Bennie Smith, Crosswaith and Totten on their first zone trips in a few days. This will add great interest also.

I think you are right, that if we act immediately, we will put it over. More power to the Chicago division. Forward to victory!

I'll see if I can get any information on Perry Howard for you.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

40. MILTON P. WEBSTER TO A. PHILIP RANDOLPH, MARCH 27, 1928

Dear Brother Randolph:

Have not received ballots yet. They should have been sent special so that they would have been delivered immediately. There has been quite some disappointment among the men because they have not been here. The men are coming to the office daily looking for them and I feel that we will be able to cast a good strike vote here in Chicago.

Do I understand that you are not to notify the Mediation Board of the taking of the strike vote until after the vote has been complete, or are you

to notify them immediately after you begin taking the vote? As I recall, the Trainmen on the Pyramid Marquette notified Governor Morrow that they were going to take a strike vote and before they had completed the strike vote the company had agreed to submit the matter to arbitration. I would like to be advised on just what the procedure is along that line.

I note the instructions in your information on the strike vote and I think if everybody carries them out will be able to put the vote over big. Three weeks ought to finish up the voting proposition. We are putting forth a strenuous effort here and I am only entitling the taking of the vote to a few loyal men. The company has already been trying to get some of the men to bring them a strike ballot. There isn't any question about it but that they are very much alarmed. I have the utmost confidence of ultimate success.

The financial returns here has not been so great. We had a little upward sputter, but have come back again to the lower level. There is considerable enthusiasm around the place but the question of paying dues is one that is hard to solve. However, we will continue to plug away. But I think that some of the lack of financial cooperation is due to the fact that the men are not making the money. Just as soon as conditions improve I believe that we will be able to get a larger number of men paying dues. Responses to the \$5 assessment has not been as liberal as one might expect. The men all agree to pay it, but I guess that just haven't got it.

I haven't been able to do much with this Citizens Committee. They seem to have all gotten cold feet since we commenced to talk strike. However, I plan to stage a big mass meeting on the 15th of April. I would stage it before, but I have not the time to give to the detail work until after the primary election. I am going to try to get the hardest boiled labor leaders in Chicago to speak in an effort to get strike votes and raise funds for the strike. If possible to finance the proposition. I will try to arrange to have a big dance the following Monday for the benefit of the strike fund and just as soon as I can work out the details I will advise. If you are out of New York round about that time, I don't think it will be a bad time for you to be over here, because this is where the big fight is anyhow. I will give you more information on this in the next few letters.

The spirit seems very high and the men are not at all afraid to approach the strike proposition. I have a story all set and in the hands of the Chicago Daily News, but he wants to see the strike ballots before the story starts. I will also make a release to the other newspapers. Things otherwise are about as usual.

I am using the utmost care in carrying on the work of the organization and we have smeared up the windows so that the people cannot see in here from the outside and it is amusing the amount of curiosity that that alone has created.

I will keep in constant touch with you.

Yours fraternally,

M. P. Webster,  
Chicago Division Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

41. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, APRIL 2, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

Thanks for your information about a newspaper man seeking to adjust the dispute of the Brotherhood and the Pullman Company. I shall be ready to meet any one who may come to take up this matter. Most of the Eastern newspaper men are friendly toward me and the Organization, so that it is difficult to surmise as to which one it will be. Do you know whether he is colored or white? Yes, I really believe that the Pullman Company wants to settle this



dispute, but it wants, of course, to try to save its face. The Brotherhood has undoubtedly got the Pullman Company licked and it knows it. This publicity is killing the Company.

It is interesting to note that out of all the extraordinary stock inflation recently in Wall street among practically all classes of stocks, railroads, radios, etc., the Pullman Company stock was not mentioned as rising to any levels, and it is due to the influence of the strike talk which the Brotherhood has the papers carrying.

There is no doubt about the Brotherhood being able to cripple the Pullman Company materially, if a real strike is necessary. The Pullman Company could not stand such a blow, and it knows it. Of course, it is going to bluff us to the very last minute, if it can, and it is quite likely, too, that it will call for a real showdown to see just how far the men will really go.

I plan to be in your section around the 18th or 20th, as I shall speak for Totten the 16th at a big mass meeting. I shall stop in Chicago on my return from Kansas City and spend a couple of days with you, so that you can plan to arrange some membership meetings for that time.

I am sorry about Brother Stewart being pulled off. I shall write him relative to his case.

The men are signing the ballots here in splendid form. There is nothing new. I am addressing a letter to the United States Mediation Board informing them of the fact that we have begun taking our strike vote. While I do not think that they will take any action as result of it, still as you say, it is no harm to have them officially informed of the existence of this maneuver. Quite a number of the non-members are signing the ballots here too.

I hope that you will use every opportunity to get over to the public the facts about the fight, so that it will be ready for a real strike at any time. Public opinion will strengthen the men materially according as it shifts for or against us. Our chief work, however, must be in steeling the backbone of the men so that it will stand firm regardless of public opinion.

If you want to hold a mass meeting in addition to the meeting among the members, I shall be available around the 20th or 22nd.

Everything moves promisingly forward.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer.

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

42. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, APRIL 5, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

In this week's issue of the Pittsburgh Courier an article is carried entitled IS RANDOLPH TO RESIGN? It includes the substance of a conversation which I had with its Editor, Robert L. Vann. He wanted to know if I would get out of the Brotherhood if the Pullman Company agreed to recognize the Brotherhood and sign an agreement with it. He said that he understood that the Company would recognize the Brotherhood, but that it wouldn't recognize me because I am a Socialist and too radical.<sup>59</sup>

This shows that the Pullman Company is thoroughly beaten and that it is ready to kick in and recognize the Organization. It will even recognize me as its head, if we stand firm and fight harder, but naturally, it wants to save its face and of course, it would like to deal with the Brotherhood with me out of it, because it believes it would be able to get a better bargain in the deal. Of course, I should be perfectly willing to resign from the Organization if the Company made a bonafide agreement with the Brotherhood and recognized it fully and completely just as other railroad unions are

recognized, if the men wished me to resign. But I shall abide by the wishes of the men.

Our only problem now is to stand firm and fight harder, because it is evident that the Pullman Company is ready to abandon the fight and give in. But we must also be cautious and careful so as to prevent the Pullman Company from putting any trick over on the Organization. You may depend upon me to see to it that nothing will be done except that which will securely and legally completely and absolutely bring victory to the Brotherhood. I am not personally concerned about my future relations with the Brotherhood. I am not important in the matter. I am only thinking of the best interests of the Brotherhood and the porters. I should be willing to make any sacrifice which would advance the cause of the Organization. Let us push the strike ballots. Get the men to pay dues and new members.

Faternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

43. MILTON P. WEBSTER TO A. PHILIP RANDOLPH, JUNE 9, 1928

Dear Brother Randolph:

Supplementary to my letter this morning, may I advise that I think we should immediately readjust the organization machinery to the new situation. We will have to eliminate surplusage anywhere it exists and so organize to keep in actual touch with Pullman porters in all districts. This, I believe, must be done immediately in order to get the desired results. You will also have to take into consideration the idea of building a treasury, that is, lay aside certain funds at stated intervals that will not be disturbed except in an extreme emergency so that whenever a situation such as this exists, we will not find ourselves in this predicament.

From observations, I believe we could have taken down 80 per cent of the men in Chicago. The company was scared stiff and they are still having the yards and depots guarded by private detectives and insist upon the men getting off and getting on at the station. I learn they did not feel a bit good about the announcement coming from Green. They realize that they have got a gigantic group to deal with now. In reply to a question this afternoon propounded to Mr. Carey by a newspaper man on the situation, he replied that he had nothing to say. I answered his statement that we were a bunch of outside agitators and gave the public the facts as to just how the Brotherhood was run and the Daily News gave it the utmost publicity and I think it discredited, in the eyes of the public, the attitude taken by him.

Thirteen new members have joined the organization since yesterday morning. Most of them young men, six and seven months in the service. The situation looks good and I will be very glad to have your new program and I believe in a very short time we will be able to build up a gigantic organization whose power will be felt not only in the interest of labor but throughout the country.

I guess I will have to forgive the Chicago Defender. I did not release anything to them and their reporter came around and happened in at the time we had the biggest meeting we have ever had in the history of the organization. The crowd was so big that they were down in the street. They gave us a big headline and a rather minute detail of what was said and done at the meeting. I guess they have really fallen out with the Pullman Company for keeps.

I will try to get away tomorrow or by Sunday morning, anyhow, to attend the conference of the Chicago Forum Council at Waukegan. It will be a good opportunity for me to get our stuff about discrimination and prejudice as disclosed in the action of the United States Mediation Board.

Things look very good. I will advise you when I will be able to leave to come down east.

Fraternally,  
M. P. Webster,  
Chicago Division Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

44. A. P. RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, JUNE 11, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

I am indeed glad to know that the spirit of the men in Chicago is high and that the Organization is stronger than ever before and that the conditions there are extremely favorable for building a more powerful machinery.

Our strategy has completely overwhelmed the Pullman Company and it is at sea and does not know what to do. Your comment on Mr. Carry's statement that the Brotherhood was an outside agitator was capital and effective.

It is splendid that thirteen new members joined the Organization since Friday. That shows that the men are aroused and awakened and are ready to go to the bat. They have been steadily joining here too.

It is encouraging to know that you feel that 80 per cent of the men would have stepped down in Chicago had the strike gone through. I am satisfied that we would have been able to paralyze the Pullman Company practically completely here, for the spirit has been higher than ever before in the history of the Movement. The night before the strike, we had the biggest meeting ever.

When you plan to come to New York, we shall have a series of membership meetings, so that you may be able to give them some strong, solid, militant, Chicago dues-paying talk.

I am glad that you will go to the Chicago Forum Council at Waukegan. I would make a strong attack on the Mediation Board, a statement on the present situation and the determination of the men to win. I wish you would try to get them to pass a resolution in favor of the Organization. That body is so organized, that such could be done.

Your suggestions on the program are very good. I will have it worked out in a very few days, so that we can hit immediately.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

45. M. P. WEBSTER TO MR. DAD MOORE, JUNE 11, 1928

Dear Dad:

Just a word of explanation on the postponement of the strike. It was done as a matter of strategy in the interest of all the men in the organization. The United States Mediation Board turned us down cold and their decision was so abrupt that it convinced us that we could expect no further cooperation from that body. It meant that after the United States Mediation Board ruled that 6013 bona fide Pullman porters could not create an emergency--that is, threaten the interruption of interstate commerce to a degree that would deprive any section of the country of this essential service--it is almost

certain that if we actually interrupted interstate commerce and did deprive the country of this essential service, they would have assured a "Hands off" policy which would have meant that we would have been face to face with the millions of dollars of the Pullman Company, which would have been not the wisest thing for us to have done, and as Mr. Green, President of the American Federation of Labor advised, we would be playing directly into the hands of the Pullman Company. That is the thing they expected us to do as one superintendent remarked, he was so sorry we did not do it. Had we walked into that trap, the organization would have been severely crippled, and as it is, the machinery of the organization is intact and the enthusiasm of the men is higher than it has ever been since our beginning and we feel that we have acted in the best interest of all men and hope that the membership will appreciate that situation.

An immediate program is in the making and will be announced from headquarters at a very early date. Chicago men are still 100 per cent. A few nights ago fully four hundred men crowded into the hall. I had to stand upon a chair in order to talk. I explained the situation to them and every man held up his right hand and swore allegiance to the Brotherhood and the continuance of the vigorous fight. Our dues income jumped up by leaps and bounds. Sixteen new members joined the organization this week, and the highest spirit has been manifested on the part of the men here and from information that I get from other territories, I am under the impression that the same condition exists everywhere.

Now we anticipate early affiliation with the American Federation of Labor and with that additional backing, which is the greatest that we could have gotten, I think the future of this organization is assured and that we have demonstrated to the world that we are on a solid foundation and are here to stay.

Much of the solidarity that now exists in the Brotherhood is due to the unyielding determination and spirit manifested by you in carrying out the program of the organization. You can rest assured that the confidence that you have inspired in the men will be appreciated. Chicago is solid behind you and we hope that you will carry on in the future as you have in the past.

Extend our greetings to the brothers on the Pacific Coast.

Fraternally yours,

M. P. Webster,  
Chicago Division Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

46. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, JUNE 14, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

If you cannot make the trip before July 4th, it will be all right. You will get the immediate program which I am drafting in the next mail.

I was down to the United States Mediation Board Wednesday, and I went into the whole situation with them. They claimed that their conviction was that there was no emergency. I asked them what did they consider an emergency? They said a condition fraught with danger was an emergency. I asked when was a condition fraught with danger? They said when it was certain that men would walk out and substantially interrupt interstate commerce. I asked what enabled them to be certain that men would walk out and substantially interrupt interstate commerce? They were then stalled and hedged. I asked wasn't the strike vote an evidence of this certainty, and the only evidence that they would act upon? They said it was a part of the evidence. I wanted to know why they accepted such evidence with the Kansas City, Mexico, Orient Road and not with the Brotherhood? They said that the Kansas City, Mexico, Orient Road was a different situation, as in that case the carrier itself petitioned for

the Emergency Board to prevent the men from walking out and that the shippers also petitioned the Board to appoint an Emergency Board to prevent the men from walking out. Then I asked if the Emergency Board was established only upon petition of carriers. This floored them. They replied, of course not. I asked them if organizations of the traveling public were to petition them for an Emergency Board in our case, would they have set up one? They said that they could not say, that they would have to take into consideration all factors.

It is obvious to me that the Pullman Company got a man who was big enough to go to Washington and tell that Mediation Board and perhaps the President himself, that the Pullman Company was not going to stand for any Emergency Board; that it was going to stir up the Negroes of this country and make them cocky, so that they would feel their power and that this would cause the business interests to have trouble with their Negro workers. Of course, the members of the Board, together with the attorney, assured me that no carrier could influence their action, but they would naturally say that. I gave them some straight, hard talk.

They felt offended about our statements in the press that the Board was partial in our case. I was advised by them to write a statement on the situation, giving my views on the matter and send it to the Board, and the Board would take official cognizance of it and write me a reply. They said that the next session of the Board would be in July. I am writing out such a statement for them. I will also give it to the press and will send you a copy, so that you may use it in Chicago. The Board does not want us to make known anything they said to me until they receive my statement and reply to same so don't make anything public yet. That is their comment to me on their decision.

Your handling of the publicity in Chicago was magnificent. Our maneuver went through like clock work. There was no hitch.

I feel that we will have to prepare to face some reprisals of the men by the Company. To that end I would advise them that if the Company officials were to ask them whether they will strike when it is called for them to say no, they are not thinking about any strike. This will throw them off their guard.

As soon as William Green returns from the Democratic Convention I am going to take up with him in detail various plans for securing the cooperation of the American Federation of Labor in our organization work. He assured me that in the next meeting of the Executive Council, which would take place in July, that a recommendation would be made to the Convention of the A.F. of L. on the question of our affiliation and receiving an International Charter. He said that their constitution provided that only the Convention can alter a charter of an International. And since the charter of the International Hotel and Restaurant Employees Alliance and International Bartenders League will have to be modified before we can get our International Charter, we will have to await the action of the Convention, but if the Executive Council recommends that such a modification be made in the charter of the Hotel Workers Union, the Convention is certain to ratify it. I feel that our securing an International Charter will represent virtual victory, for when we stage our strike, we will have the active support of all the labor bodies in the A.F. of L. in the several districts.

I wish to advise that you keep on your guard against the Communists. They have circulated propaganda round in New York that Randolph and Webster sold the Brotherhood out to William Green of the American Federation of Labor. Of course, this is ridiculous, but they are trying to stir the men up and get them to strike before they are ready to strike. I would keep them out of the meetings and keep their propaganda from the men. They went so far as to picket one of our meetings here, but they will not make any headway. I will send you a copy of the paper in which they are attacking you and myself. Of course, we haven't got to lose any sleep over this matter, because the men will pay them no mind, but we have got to keep their propaganda out of the hands of the men to prevent confusion.

I am glad to know that The Chicago Defender gives you such good support and cooperation. I shall be glad to get some of the clippings of the Chicago papers. Undoubtedly, we got a million dollars worth of publicity, and it is breaking the backbone of the Company. We got our aims on wages and working conditions before the entire country. The big dailies are writing editorials in our favor, therefore, we are stronger than ever before.

Now, I think the next move of the Company is going to be to stage a wage conference to give the men more wages because of the public and the Brotherhood. We must prepare to kill this conference before it begins. This we can do.

I am glad to know of the fine success Brother Puckett is making. Everything moves promisingly forward here.

Brother Totten has written me about the situation in Kansas City. I am planning to make some changes in the work there. He wants to come to New York very soon. May I request that you send him \$50.00 on his transportation at your earliest convenience? I shall appreciate this greatly. When you come to New York, we can hold the Policy Committee Conference, since the majority of the members will be here.

Faternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

47. M. P. WEBSTER TO MR. DAD MOORE, JUNE 26, 1928

Dear Dad:

Received your letter today. I am sorry to learn of the situation you referred to about the young men in your office becoming converted to the worker's party, so to speak.

That group, is a group of opportunists who have no apparent destination and according to reports, are supposed to have actually originated in Russia and they are believers of accomplishing the purposes of labor by actual force, that is my say, by fighting. I think Brother Randolph cautioned all the organizers about this matter before the strike situation was developed. However, it is well to stay shy of them. We have an organization here in Chicago and also one in New York of the same group which have been broadcasting the story that Randolph and Webster sold out the Brotherhood to Green. That is all tommy-rot because Green does not need the Brotherhood and there wouldn't be anything accomplished by selling out to Green, but it is just simply a bal hoo of a group of opportunists who insist that we should have gone on the strike regardless of whether or not it would have been to the best interest of the organization.

I don't think you need worry about those people because they are not of much force and effect and if the gentleman insists on going with them let him go, but be sure to make things plain to your members as to what the situation is.

Where on earth before did you ever hear of one labor organization selling out to another labor organization? I think if the men will read the literature that has been sent out from headquarters on the reasons why the story was postponed, they can readily see the advisability of postponing the strike at this time. The strike, however, has been postponed and not called off, so there may be an opportunity for the men to strike if conditions do not warrant a change in the program.

They held a meeting in New York, also and denounced the Brotherhood, particularly Randolph and I, and now they are coming forward as a saviour of the Pullman porter. Their efforts however are so feeble and following so small, that I don't think we need worry at all about anything that they do but protect your membership and be sure they are acquainted with the facts in the case and be sure that everybody reads the literature that is sent out from headquarters.

I would get in touch with the various members of the organizing committee and explain things to them in detail and you might read this letter to them. All these folks want is a chance to raise a roughhouse, regardless as to what merits would be. Just inquire what they have accomplished by those methods

and that will give you an idea of just how much force and effect their program has. There are a number of them in all large cities, and it is their desire to keep up as much trouble as possible. Just ask them what facts have they got upon which to base the charge that the leaders of the Brotherhood have sold out! Ask your men that question!

I do not think I would waste any time with them or attend their meetings, but I would devote all my efforts in making the thing plain to the members of the Brotherhood because it is on the members of the Brotherhood that depends its success and not on any daily workers, or communists or anybody else.

Things in Chicago are in good shape. I expect to go down east to spend a few days with the Chief and consummate new efforts and map out the new program and I will let you hear from me while down there or immediately after I return however, you can write me here at the office and my mail will be forwarded. Be sure and keep an eye on that other group down there.

Fraternally yours,

M. P. Webster,  
Chicago Division Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

48. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, JUNE 27, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

Just a word to thank you for your telegram informing me of the nefarious activities of the Communists in Oakland, California. I have sent air mail letters to Brother Dad Moore and Brother Dellums and all the members of the organizing committee. I shall also send letters to the general membership. We cannot temporize with this Communist menace. It's a sinister and destructive crowd which will stop at nothing in order to realize its aim which is to wreck and ruin every organization which is not Communistic.

I hope you will have a good talk with all of the men who come into Chicago from Oakland and warn them against the Communist outfit.

Also instruct Brotherhood men who run into Oakland to denounce and condemn the crowd. We shall kill this reptile at the very outset. Its the best propaganda the Pullman Company could subsidize and the Company will subsidize it and it may be subsidizing it for all we know.

I would suggest that you get something in the Federationist condemning the Communists. All the A.F. of L. organizations are bitter on the Communists because they have almost wrecked some A.F. of L. unions. Everything moves promisingly forward.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

49. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, JUNE 28, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

The strike strategy of the Brotherhood represents a signal and overwhelming victory for the Organization. It has completely swept the Pullman Company

into consternation and despair. Baffled, outwitted and outthought in every encounter, the Company is on its last legs, but is trying to hold on with a vain and vanishing hope that the Brotherhood will go crazy and lose its head and result in victory for the Company.

From the most hard-headed, seasoned, responsible and experienced labor leaders come the assurance that we have thoroughly licked the Company, and that we have only to hold our ground and extend our line of vantage by organization of the 4,000 men outside of the Brotherhood, and build up a dues-paying psychology among the membership.

Our maneuver with the American Federation of Labor and the Railroad Brotherhoods is bringing us unprecedented, extraordinary and remarkable power which is certain and sure to compel surrender on the part of the Pullman Company. But we must realize that it will take some time and every Pullman porter must be educated and shown that the Brotherhood has been in existence but a short time and that it is not to be expected to right in three years the wrongs which have been heaped up for sixty; that they need only to exercise the patience with the Brotherhood which white workers have exercised with their organization, and we will build the most powerful citadel of Negro achievement ever erected in the history of the world.

At all times present to the men the most vigorous optimism, hope, faith, confidence and assurance of victory. These qualities will reflect themselves in the mind and spirit of the porters. Time, right, justice and truth are on our side, and it is impossible for the Brotherhood to lose if we exercise just the mere common sense of standing firm.

I am sending you under separate cover some propaganda material to be used among the white public. You will know how best to utilize this material in your local district.

Faternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

50. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, JUNE 28, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

Your letter relative to the discharge of Brother L. Hampton received. I recall him very well. He is a man of strong spirit and determination. I have written him relative to his situation and made certain suggestions to him that might help him to adjust his matter with his local Superintendent. When I hear from him again, I shall then know how to utilize him in doing some work for the Brotherhood in that section. It is simply another instance of intimidation as result of the fear of the Company that a strong man will influence the rank and file too completely.

In reference to your letter relative to signing of petitions, "yellow dog" contracts and vote for the Plan, may I say that your opinions are quite cogent, and there is much to be said for the argument you present, however, we shall go into this thoroughly when you come East. It will be splendid for Brother Smith to come along with you. I should like to know the exact date you will arrive here, so that we may hold a membership meeting, as your presence will present something new to the local membership, and it will arouse interest. Brother Smith's presence with you will add to the interest.

Your opinion about retrenchment is entirely sound. We must make some very definite and drastic retrenchment, and your suggestion about the St. Louis office is absolutely correct, and some such adjustment will have to be made. We will talk over this matter also when you come East. Of course, I have already settled on it, but we have the problems of method which is important in doing anything of this sort.



I think the publicity plan you suggest of depriving the Company of any opportunity to capitalize the idea of the Organization losing ground will be effective.

May I advise that you get the Citizens Committee to adopt a statement condemning the Communists efforts to break up the Brotherhood. I want to get our various Citizens Committees to condemn this group, so that we may use these statements for publicity and also to get the cooperation of the American Federation of Labor and the Big Four Brotherhoods in our organization campaign.

Both of these groups have been greatly disturbed by the Communists, and they are bitter on that crowd. When you get the Committee there to adopt a statement condemning the Communists, you can give it to the Chicago papers, and they will be glad to get it, because it is good news to know that Negroes are aware of the menace of the Communists and are determined to route them.

I shall send you a copy of the statement which we are having adopted by the Citizens Committee here. You may use it with some modifications to suit the local situation, so that it will be news to the Chicago papers.

Faternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

51. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, AUGUST 8, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

Thanks for your letter of the 4th inst. Yes, I see where the Communists are starting a world-wide drive to organize the Negroes. They are redoubling their attacks here in New York on the Brotherhood, and especially the Strike Committee which called off the strike. However, they won't make any headway among the men. Mr. Richard Moore, who was out in Chicago, has challenged me to a debate, but of course, I am not going to debate with anybody about the Brotherhood.<sup>60</sup>

We held a great meeting Sunday afternoon, July 29th where the presentation of the proceeds of the Benefit was made. We had a band of sixty pieces and a fine programme. It was like one of the great meetings in Chicago, not quite as many people, however.

I hope you will be able to get your release on B. C. Forbes in the American. It will be very effective, because it will get our angle before the public. I wired you immediately on return from Atlantic City that your release was O.K. I appreciate your attitude on the matter of a centralization of the publicity.

I wish to advise that your idea of sending a letter to the men urging them to pay up their dues, since we are going into the American Federation of Labor is a capital one and will have some effect. We can let them know that our standing in the A.F. of L. will be based upon the number of members who are in good standing as dues payers. It is true that the larger the dues paying membership we have, the greater influence we will have in the Organization. I think, too, that it will have great influence on the dispensation and splendid effect on the whispering campaign for new members.

The letter from the International Labor office requesting a statement from you on earnings of the Pullman porters is legitimate. They are a responsible group. I would not give them anything on our constitution, however.

I have just received a letter from Mr. J. Finlay Wilson, Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks, that he will grant me the privilege of speaking before that body any day I may desire during its session. He wants to know, however, whether I am an elk. I suppose this will have something to do with it, so

I am planning to get into the Order, if possible, before the Convention, so as to be able to appear before them. I am sure that if we can get before them, we will not only get their endorsement, but a contribution of a thousand dollars.

Everything moves promisingly forward.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

52. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, AUGUST 9, 1928

Dear Brother Webster:

May I advise that you proceed with a whispering campaign informing the men of the fact that the Brotherhood is going into the American Federation, but that the main qualification necessary is that a large number be up with their dues. Point out to them that the strength, power and influence of the Brotherhood will depend upon the number of members who are financial. Let them know that Negroes have been hollering about the American Federation of Labor discriminating against them for years; now the opportunity is here for a Negro organization to gain great power by getting a charter from the Federation, and the main question which must be answered is, are we ready to meet the test by paying our dues as the white union men do?

Let them know that when the Brotherhood is in the Federation, the Standard Railroad Unions, such as the Big Four will be more obligated to protect and support the Brotherhood men than before, but they will want to know whether these men are financial. And unless a Brotherhood man is financial he is not entitled to protection from the American Federation of Labor or the Standard Railroad Unions any more than a member in a lodge is entitled to protection from that lodge if he is not financial. I feel that they can understand the force of this argument if it is persistently and vigourously impressed upon them. I would not mention any date as to when we shall get our charter, as a date has not been fixed, but that we will get it, we are quite sure.

Urge all of the men, too, to bring in a new member. I would also suggest that you make a drive to sell gold and silver stamps among the men. This will appeal to their sense of race pride, and I think they will be inclined to respond.

Keep up the good work.

Fraternally yours,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

53. A. PHILIP RANDOLPH TO MILTON P. WEBSTER, AUGUST 30, 1928

My dear Brother Webster:

August marks the first birth-year of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car

Porters. Hard-headed labor men are unanimous in their opinion that we have made marvelous progress, yet great is the work yet to be done. We are in our swaddling clothes, but we shall and will grow to manhood. We are the strongest "one-year-old known" to the labor movement.

We are now in the midst of our referendum, upon the completion of which we shall call for a conference with the Company, upon the refusal of which we shall take up our case with the Mediation Board. May I urge that every man bestir himself in getting both members and non-members to sign the questionnaires and return them immediately. We are also getting a citizen's petition signed in various cities where porters are, endorsing the fight of the Brotherhood for economic justice. These petitions will also be presented to the Board. They will constitute a formidable force of public sentiment which the Company and the Board will be compelled to reckon with.

May we ever keep our eyes on the lighthouse of economic victory. We are building not only for the present but for all time. Remember, brethren, what other railroad workers have done, we can and will do. Let us demonstrate that fact. But we must realize that our work has just begun. Our salvation lies in our own hands. No one can defeat us but ourselves, and if we are honest, conscientious and determined, we cannot fail. Let us fight with the flaming, unconquerable zeal, devotion, loyalty and sacrifice of the early Christians who were forced to drink the bitter dregs of persecution for their ideals and principles. By solidarity we triumph! Long live the Brotherhood! Long live the spirit of your stalwart Committee! Long live the New Negro in his fight for freedom! You are the pioneers in a great struggle for economic justice for oppressed peoples of color. May we ever remain true to our sacred trust and fight on till death.

Accept my congratulations upon your splendid work the past year. Let us renew our faith and courage and rededicate our hearts and minds to the unfinished task of economic freedom and justice for Pullman porters in particular and the race in general.

Your faithful servant,

A. Philip Randolph,  
General Organizer.

Sleeping Car Porters' Union-Chicago Division Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

#### OTHER BLACK UNIONS IN THE TRAIN SERVICE

##### 54. RAILWAY MEN'S INTERNATIONAL BENEVOLENT INDUSTRIAL ASSN., SPECIAL BULLETIN - UNIONS

August 21, 1920

Gentlemen:

The Special communication for Aug. 14-15 was delayed as a matter of necessary policy while I had to go on an emergency trip South. I shall announce to all the International membership to attend meetings on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, Aug. 29, 30 and 31. The Announcement will be through this week's Plain Dealer and The Chicago Defender. Subjects to be placed before the members are:

1. The policy after Sept. 1st, 1920.
2. The fight to be made to legally break the contracts of Brotherhoods and the white mechanical unions of the A.F. of L.

3. The special assessment to finance the legal battle; to place a year round International lecturer and Auditor in the field; and to gain publicity helpful to the Negro Railway workers from big daily papers.

4. A special annual death per capita of \$1.00 to be voted by the convention which will add several hundred to the \$100.00 paid each beneficiary of deceased members.

5. No salaries of International Officers to be raised over what is paid now.

6. Shall we separately organize our insurance company to take over accident and sickness insurance now carried by white companies? This question will have the local vote, Yes or No, and make the vote a part of the Delegate's instructions to Convention!

SUBJECT ONE:

After September 1st, negroes, especially skilled and semi-skilled workmen in shop, engine or transportation service must stand together as a man in order, (1) to prevent white unions from removing us completely from these jobs; (2) in order to get proper pay and working conditions from the railroads, everywhere in the skilled crafts you see what the white man intends so argument from us is unnecessary. GET TOGETHER. Get all mechanics of color together. Send as many delegates to the convention as you possibly can. If we can go to our Fraternal conclaves at our own expense we surely can come to our bread and butter convention at Local and personal expense. I want 400 delegates at Chicago September 25th.

SUBJECT TWO:

Our plans for legal battle must be kept secret. All our lawyers are being called to Chicago. If you are not here by delegate you will be a bigger enemy to colored railway men and the race than the white enemy.

SUBJECT THREE:

The Board of Directors in order to go the limit in court against the white union contracts or to secure of our own for all crafts has ordered a special "Contract War Assessment" of two dollars to be levied on each member and payable in two installments of \$1.00 (one dollar) each, the first by September 15, 1920, the second by October 15, 1920. The law requires that all assessments be paid before dues or a member is unfinancial.

SUBJECT FOUR:

The lecturer and Auditor is to gather facts for contracts. Instruct the member and handle local grievances on the spot. That is the greatest present need of this association. I have needed help all this year. I, or not any other man could live through another year of what I have had to face alone during 1920. Instruct your delegates to vote for an International Lecturer and Auditor whose position shall be appointive by the president and the board of directors. If we carry the Negro Railway Workers' position to the public through the Daily papers we will show up the White unions. It all takes money hence, the assessment. If your job is worth having it is worth fighting for. It took billions in Liberty Bonds to win the war. It will take money to hold your jobs.

Let every local have its members consider and instruct the delegates to vote for a special annual death per capita tax of one dollar to be applied in this way to wit: If ten thousand members pay it there will be ten thousand dollars in addition to the REGULAR DEATH FUND. If 50 members die during the year their beneficiaries will be paid the regular \$100.00 at the time of death and in addition 75% of \$100.00 or seven thousand five hundred will be divided between to widows or orphans at the end of the year, making each get an additional sum of \$150.00 for the payment of only \$1.00 per year in addition to a regular monthly endowment of 50¢ or \$2,500 to go to the general fund and help keep down extra assessments. I believe every man can see this and will vote for it. I urge you to instruct your delegate to vote "Yes" as it will mean a possible \$250.00 instead of \$100.00 and only for \$1.00 extra.

SUBJECT FIVE:

I am flatly against increasing any salaries of International Officers. The contract War Assessment above referred to and which is binding in all

locals and every individual member of this association from the date August 21, 1920, is not needed to pay present salaries and will not go for same. It is to put more men in the field. Men like T. C. Jefferson, E. F. Roberts, Holmes, Phillips, Jones, Glover, Scotland, and Webster. Our people need encouragement and instruction. We need an auditor to keep all locals straight in their books. We need contracts. We need tax fund. That is what the assessment is for. Pay it!!!

## SUBJECT SIX:

Are we going to continue to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to White accident insurance companies and furnish work for white girls and boys or shall we organize a "Mutual" company of our own? Instruct your delegate to vote "Yes." I will have our lawyers do the rest. Remember! Yours is the most powerful organization of negro laborers in the world. Everything I have asked you to do above you can easily do and if we hold what we have won, if we care to keep on our jobs and keep jobs like ours open to our children, we must STICK AND FIGHT. We must pay for victory by loyalty and with money. We need brains at the head and we must pay for it. We have it in the race among railroad men and we should use it. What about September 1st, you ask? We can get more after September 1st if we STICK AND FIGHT than we have now. We can upset some of the nasty white contracts. WE WILL WIN. If your delegate's credentials are not in this office by September 10th your men will not get proper committee appointments. Send them in NOW. Congressman M. E. Madden has accepted my invitation to be at our opening day speaking on September 28th. Be in Chicago for the smoker Monday night. September 28. Let us fight as well as pray for Victory.

BE AT HEADQUARTERS SEPTEMBER 27th.

R. L. Mays,  
International President

Bulletin from Robert L. Mays in the Chicago Historical Society.

# 55. NEGRO RAILROAD MEN HOLD SESSION IN BIRMINGHAM 200 DELEGATES WERE PRESENT

Monday morning, May 17th, marked the opening session here of the first Grand Lodge meeting of the National Order of Locomotive Firemen, headed by Osie L. Long, prominent citizen of Birmingham as president. It will be remembered that the National Order of Locomotive Firemen was permitted here in December when a large number of railroad men from various sections of the country gathered, directed by R. L. Mays, of Chicago, President of the International Benevolent Association.

The sessions this week were held in the K. of P. Hall and two hundred or more delegates from various sections of the country were in attendance, a large number of friends headed the open session held in the auditorium of the 16th Street Baptist church. Officers of the organization are: Osie Long, National President, Birmingham, Ala.; W. H. Penny, First Vice-President, North Carolina; Sam Malone, Second Vice-President, Montgomery, Ala.; Robt. B. Glover, Third Vice-President, Raleigh, N.C.; E. F. Roberts, of Birmingham, is National Treasurer.<sup>61</sup>

International President R. L. Mays, J. H. Eiland, President of C. of E., met with the delegates and committees, and the International Trainmen and C. of R. E. Trainmen be affiliated permanently, with representation on the executive council. The meeting was in session three days, when all phases of the work inspecting conditions of railroad men and their respective duties were discussed and explained. Many strong addresses were delivered by delegates. The Order of Locomotive Firemen has national reputation and branch organizations in many sections of the country. The membership now numbers several thousand and is rapidly increasing. A delegation from Macon, headed by W. L. Grant, had not led the meeting Wednesday morning but were on their way. President Long and Treasurer E. F. Roberts together with other officers,

are pleased with the record made by the organization in constructive work.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, May 22, 1920.

## 56.

## E. F. ROBERTS EXPLAINS WORK OF COLORED FIREMEN'S ORGANIZATION

He attacks vigorously certain publications that attempt to coerce Negro workmen in white unions. Would rather be tool of capital than a tool of certain labor men.

## Editorial Note:

Mr. E. F. Roberts, Secretary-Treasurer of the National Order of Locomotive Firemen, with offices on the third floor of the Pythian Temple, Birmingham, Ala., has addressed a letter to a publication here in Birmingham in which is expressed much sentiment, thoughts, truth and logic. Mr. Roberts tells us that some of the letter was left out. This idea of forming a separate organization to represent the interest of Negro firemen is a sane one and is resulting in great good. The Secretary further explains that the publication endorsed the American Federation of Labor and induced Negro firemen to cooperate, explaining that the "color line" had been wiped out. If the utterance of Mr. Roberts, as shown in his letter, is true, the statement made by the attacking publication is erroneous and cannot be substantiated by the facts. "Color lines" and "race lines" will never be abolished; they are more pronounced in some sections and with some nations than they are with others, but wherever civilization is, color lines and race lines are noticeable. They cannot, on earth, be wiped out. Thousands of years ago even families were distinguished by the different tribes, races were distinguished as they are now by names, race lines are in the early history. These distinctions may not always mean that one race is better than another; it may not be distinction of color, or texture of hair; advantages sometimes make a very grave distinction. This is true with the Negro race today; disadvantages and limitations are more against him than his inability to accept the advantages and merited opportunities.<sup>62</sup> That the Negro is less intelligent on the job, is born of an ignorant source, it comes from a baby mind; any concern that employs labor will state without hesitation that the average Negro is more intelligent, more worthy of consideration and advancement than the average white man doing the same job, and if some of these would-be leaders and labor dictators would talk with some of the men who work with their hands, who are largely responsible for the safe return of these locomotives as they leave the various depots, they would have a different vision and a clearer knowledge regarding matters affecting the labor interests in the South. One of the great troubles with at least a few of our publications within the race is that the chief editors of these concerns have no editorial sense and no place to put any. A newspaper without an editor is a dangerous publication, and that is the position in which some of our newspaper men find themselves, the editor's name appearing on the editorial page has but little to do with the editorial work and this duty is performed by a bunch of fellows, one trying his hand this week and the other trying his next week, thus the muddle that Mr. Roberts is now attempting to straighten out.

Roberts is a man of experience, intelligence and has a substantial character. The work that Mr. Osie Long, as president of the organization, and Secretary E. F. Roberts have done in the past few months, being directed by that matchless organizer of men, R. L. Mays, has wrought wonderfully for the Negroes in this district, and is the first big job that has been done for the Negro since the World War, the next substantial effort was the organizing of the Republican Club of Jefferson County by W. B. Driver. These are outstanding features of the Birmingham district and both have been criticized by a few interlopers and community destructionists. We wish to congratulate Mr. Roberts on his fine sense and duty of his office, and his quick answer to an attack made on the principles and purpose of his movement. Here is the letter.

Birmingham, Ala., June 20, 1920

To the Editor Times Plain Dealer:

There appeared on the forefront of your paper last week in big headlines, "American Federation of Labor wipes out 'color line;'" An account of which was given by the National Negro News Press Association. In that article the writer attempted to explain the action of the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor held in Montreal, Canada on June 10, in which it is said that the convention passed a resolution recommending that the component organization wipes out color line. Such resolution having been passed does not mean that it has become a law, binding upon the National and International Trade Unions affiliated with the A.F. of L.

The fact remains that this is the third time that false statements of this kind have been published. We may refer to the convention held in St. Paul, Minn., in 1918, and also last year at Atlantic City, N.J. If the resolution had become effective in either of these conventions, why was it necessary to even mention it in the convention held at Montreal?

#### Why Should Not All Working Men Get Together?

The above is an extract from an editorial, in which the writer endeavors to impress upon the Negro working man that it is to his best interest to join white unions. Thus he says: "We have longed for the day to come when the colored workingman would have the foresight to see that he must for his own benefit join hands with the white workman and cease to be exploited and used as a tool by the capitalist to defeat the effort of his more intelligent and organized ally--white workman."

The writer may be possessed with a perfect store of knowledge on science and literature, but he is absolutely ignorant of the industrial conditions and the operation of the government of trade unions. He charged the colored workman with being a tool for the capitalist.

I wish to say that it is not the intention of the colored workman to be a tool for anyone. However, we are quite sure that we would be better off if we were tools for capitalists than tools for the white workmen. Furthermore, the writer of the editorial asserts that the white workmen are more intelligent than colored. This he does not know and cannot prove.

#### Many White Trade Unions Do Not Admit Negro Membership

As to this matter, we may say with exception of the Maintenance of Way Organization, which give to the Negro workmen an allied membership, not only of the other fourteen (14) National and International Unions of the A.F. of L. accept colored workmen's membership.

It has been suggested by some of our professional men that we accept charters of the A.F. of L. and be organized into separate locals, but should we consider that the color line was abolished under such terms? What about representation in the district and grand lodges? The fact remains that the Maintenance of Way Organization is the only one of the trade unions of the Railroad Department of the A.F. of L. that admits Negro membership. It sets a precedent in its constitution which provides that "allied (Negro workmen) lodges shall have representation in the grand lodge only through the general chairman of the system in which he is engaged." The general chairman is white, therefore this legislation debars colored representation from the grand lodge.

It is quite reasonable to suppose that if they legislate laws to keep you out of their grand lodges they will not enact laws in favor of us in the grand lodge. Whatever may be the opinion of the professional man, we know what is best for us.

The doctor may know how to examine his patients' diagnosis and treat it successfully. The lawyer may know how to grant legal information and also defend his client. The minister may understand how to deliver the divine message and lead his membership, but their knowledge will fail them when they attempt to apply it to a trade unionism.

This fact was demonstrated through the columns of the last issue of The Times Plain Dealer as it was through other Negro publications when they declared that the A.F. of L. had wiped out the color line.

Respectfully,

E. F. ROBERTS

*The Birmingham Reporter*, July 10, 1920.

## 57. R. L. MAYS BUSY WITH HIS MEN; CONFERENCES ARE HELD

Negro Deceivers Are Being Checked by Real Negro Citizens and Patriots

Special Call Meeting is Being Held

When President Mays Explains the Work of the Organization;  
Long and Roberts, Two Other Officers, Make Addresses

Leaders among railroad men of the Negro race have on constructive plans for the advancement of the craft throughout the district and the Order has now a national reputation and is recognized by the United States Government in the Federation of Labor as directed by the Government.

In the last few days many important conferences of Negro railroad men have been staged in this community to formulate and launch a campaign of a protective nature against what is considered misleading statements of the paid organizers of the Negro race who have been placed in this territory especially ordered to disseminate a half truth and doctored statements relative to the aim and intention of the organized white union of railway workmen, as a result of the action taken by the recent Montreal convention of the A.F. of L., and whispered intentions of at least one of the members of the four big brotherhoods. It is generally known at Montgomery, Atlanta, Chattanooga and other points at the convention of Negro men in railway service and in and about the shop and sheds, these men have appeared and have preached as truth what is in fact a minority impression of the few liberal-minded men in the great but as yet discriminatory Federation, and so far as the railway department of the same is concerned.

It is further reported that at points where these men have met Negro men acquainted with the facts as a result of the conditions actually existing and where the policy of discrimination is so strong that the white railway unions are seeking to displace Negro men from jobs they have held for many years and to prevent the future employment of others to new jobs, these paid organizers are meeting with no success.

They are reported to be carrying about with them abbreviated copies of the Constitutions of various white railway unions showing the absence of the famous "color clause." They are further reported to be conveniently leaving behind them the full copies of the constitutions which contain the eligibility to membership clause showing definitely that at the present time that the membership is limited to "adult males, white."

Those who have had personal contact with these men assert that the men are either dupes and ignorant of the things they are telling Negro men or that they are baseless knaves bent on deceiving their people for the sake of the money paid them as organizers.

President R. L. Mays is On the Scene

A counter campaign of enlightenment has been vigorously conducted by a personal visitation to the South on the part of the International President of the Railway Men's International Association, R. L. Mays.

Mr. Mays is continuing a straight-forward campaign of organization among Negro men which is designed to secure absolute industrial equality for Negro men in railway service and similar treatment from the employing companies. This simple policy for full and fair consideration has been so cleverly conducted that at no time has organized labor--white--been able to point to Negro men as scabs. And because the doctrine of greater personal and mass efficiency, productivity and dependability is continually held up to Negro men as the target to shoot at the companies have been unable to find fault with this great Race organization and have in fact given the representatives of the men of this association every fair and reasonable consideration.

Some Facts Made Plain

A significant fact to report is that in the month of May past the application of the Colored Association of Railway Employees, consisting of colored brakemen, switchmen and trainmen which was placed before the A.F. of L.



by John Henry Eiland, the Grand President, was returned to Mr. Eiland by Secretary Frank Morrison of the American Federation of Labor with a note stating that because to grant such a charter to the colored men would be an infringement on the "jurisdiction" of existing unions the application had to be refused.

Yet some paid colored organizers are saying that the doors of the brotherhood are open to black men.

A large number of firemen, their wives and prominent citizens met President R. L. Mays Sunday evening and listened to a forceful address on the work of the organization. Mr. Mays exposed in very plain language the work of race parasites. He told of the accomplishments of the national order of locomotive firemen.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, July 17, 1920.

#### 58. SUCCESSFUL MEETING OF RAIL MEN

By Associated Negro Press

Chicago, Oct. 7.--The Railway Men's International Benevolent Association is holding its 7th annual session here. Delegates representing railroad workers of every section of the country are in attendance. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: Robert L. Mays, of Chicago, succeeds himself as President; M. P. Webster, 1st Vice-President; C. G. Bernard, of Boston, 2nd Vice-President; E. F. Roberts, Birmingham, 3rd Vice-President; A. F. Peters, A. E. Storum, of Philadelphia, and A. E. Phillips, of Chattanooga, Tenn., 4th, 5th, and 6th Vice-Presidents; W. C. Wright, Financial Secretary; M. O. Bousfield, Corresponding Secretary, and J. W. Monroe, Treasurer.

Among the speakers were Attorney E. A. T. Watkins, Frank Gillespie and Roscoe C. Simmons. This organization is one of the most flourishing in the country. Besides the general sessions of the convention which were crowded with constructive work, plenty of social entertainment was provided for the visitors, closing with a mammoth ball at the Eighth Regiment Armory. President Robert L. Mays is one of the most progressive organizers of the country. He is a young man who has literally "come up from the bottom," and he has produced an organization of railroad men which is a credit to the entire group. The National Headquarters of the organization is in Chicago, where they own a splendid piece of property, 3441 Wabash Avenue, having paid cash for it.<sup>63</sup>

*The Birmingham Reporter*, October 9, 1920.

#### 59. COLORED TRAINMEN WILL NOT TAKE PART IN STRIKE

By Associated Negro Press

Chicago, Ill., Oct. 28--The attitude which colored trainmen would take in the event of the threatened strike has been a matter of public interest. The following order has been dispatched to the members of the Railroad Men's International, the largest union effort among colored railroad men by President Mays. "All members of all crafts of this organization, having taken no strike ballot, will not officially participate in any strike or walkout of railroad employees."

"Former instructions will be followed. You will remain at work as long as conditions will permit you, and your own safety or the safety of the public is not endangered or by so staying you will not contribute to any lawlessness in the communities in which you live and work."

"Should a strike be called on the road for which you work by the craft of which you are a member and a shut down seems eminent as a result, you will report to your immediate superior official that you are ready for work when conditions make the same possible and ask for a leave of absence to begin the day of the shutdown and to end the day the dispute has been settled to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, and with the assurance of public peace. Local chairmen or local presidents will call joint meetings of all the men of all crafts of this organization in their respective communities. They will elect a steering committee of three, whose duty it will be to keep in touch with the company officials and with the local chairmen of the striking workers in order to ascertain the exact hour of settlement and to be in position to advise the men when to return to work because of the adjustment of the dispute and the automatic termination of the leave of absence."

"Our men will remain away from railway properties during their leave of absence and will report twice a day at their meeting places to receive instructions from the chairman of the steering committee. These meetings should be at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily."

"In the meantime, all members are urged to prepare to support the organization to make a stiff fight in supporting all other organizations against a further reduction in railway workers' wages until and unless railroad freight rates have first been reduced in proportion to the wage reduction order of July 1, 1921."

"Further instructions by confidential letter now in the hands of all local secretaries. Local meetings called for Monday, October 24th, to receive further instructions."

*The Birmingham Reporter*, October 29, 1921.

#### 60. NEGRO FIREMEN ARE ORGANIZED

The International Benevolent Association, held here last week, under the direction of Railroad men, directed by Mr. Robert L. Mays of Chicago, the International President, was a success from every viewpoint. Railroad firemen from nearly every section of the South were present and discussed fully the situation as it confronts the colored man in the industrial fields of America. Osie Long of Birmingham was made President of the Association, and E. F. Roberts was made Treasurer. The conference lasted here three days and nearly one hundred men were in attendance. All branches of organized and unorganized labor respecting railroad men were called into this meeting and their respective conditions were discussed and explained. The name of the organization perfected at this conference is The National Standard Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. Pres. Mays states the purpose of the organization is to promote efficiency among colored men and keep them intact for continuous and helpful service both for themselves and for the Companies.

The organization now represents some twenty-three thousand members throughout the country, and Birmingham will be designated as the Southern section for the National Head with Osie Long as President. E. F. Roberts, a well-known Fireman on the Frisco Railroad, left the conference for Springfield, Mo., where he met the officials of the Frisco Company in interest of the colored firemen on that railroad, and he returns with favorable and satisfactory reports coming from that body, and they have agreed to meet a conference of the colored firemen in Birmingham at a very early date.

The organization has a national reputation now and its branches are in nearly every section where colored railroad men are employed. The officers elected at this conference are as follows: Osie Long, National President, Birmingham, Ala.; W. H. Penny, first vice-president, Rocky Mount, N.C.; Sam Malone, second vice-president, Montgomery, Ala.; Robt. B. Glover, third vice-president, Raleigh, N.C.; E. F. Roberts, National Treasurer, Birmingham, Ala.; E. M. Johnson, Vicksburg, Miss.; Y. and M. V. Railroad; J.S. Washington, Shreveport, La.; V. S. and P. Railroad; W. J. Simmons, Augusta, Ga.; C. and W. C. and Ga. Railroad; Ernest Cobb, Henry Hardy, Fitzgerald, Ga.; A. B. and A. Railroad; John Vailis, G. M. and N. O. Railroad; G. W. Duncan, Savannah,

G. C. of Ga. Railroad.

Thomas C. Jefferson, Savannah, Ga., was appointed International Deputy Grand Organizer.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, January 10, 1920.

61.

COLORED WORKMEN THREATENED AND LEAVE JOB ON RAILROAD IN MISSISSIPPI

By Associated Negro Press

Brookhaven, Miss., Nov. 27.--Four well-behaved Colored workmen of the Illinois Central Railroad were accosted by a masked white man near the Merchants Grocery Company and warned that they had only three days more to work, with the result that they did not return to their employment the next day. The four had been in the railroad's employ from five to twenty-one years respectively.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, December 3, 1921.

62. MY ATTITUDE TOWARD NEGRO LABOR

By William N. Doak<sup>64</sup>

United States Secretary of Labor and Member of the President's Cabinet

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*The Crisis*, 30 (July, 1931): 225.

63. UNION STYLES: BLACK LABOR IN WHITE COATS

By Floyd C. Covington

Whether clothes makes or unmakes the man is not altogether the mooted question. Fashion Park satellites would, however, insist that clothes form a very large part of the making.

It is a wide graph, fashionably speaking, from the correct, formal attire of the well-dressed man to that of a dining car waiter in white duck dinner jacket, trimmed in ornamental brass buttons; or the unpretentious white apron, with dangling kite-tail strings, worn by a railway cook. The significance is not in the disparity of the comparison--as incongruous as it is--but in the realization that one purports the enhancement of dignity, while the other connotes the mein of servility.

The presence of a swarthy black donned in a waiter's jacket, purveying esculents to and from in a dining car, is not an uncommon sight. Nor, is the fact that the concoction of good food be more or less dependent upon the jovial, bluff-faced, ebony cook, enclosed in a diner's "hell-hole," a startling discovery. When, however, hundreds of these ubiquitous servers in brass buttoned jackets, and scores of these grease bespattered cooks join hands and consent to tie apron-strings--all in a common cause, nothing short of the miraculous could be the result. Tuxedo-garbed stewards, standing at omnipresent attention to insure the "is-everything-all right . . .?" atmosphere of Sir and Madam traveler in legion rolling dining salons, could only marvel and look at their strongholds.

For, Africa had come out of the kitchen to discuss common grievances. A new union style was created: black labor had moulded the sentiment of white coats and aprons into a standard garb of cooperation. As someone aphoristically put it: "Bees don't whine. They hum while working. They cooperate. The result: Honey!" Thus, some two hundred workers buzzing the note of discontent, cooperated that the effect of their combined sting should inject sufficient virus into the veins of a gigantic corporation that it should be forced to rub the spot where it had been bitten.

May 4th, 1926 may well be considered an anniversary of emancipation. On that day, in the city of Los Angeles, at the Bronx hotel in the heart of the black belt the D.C.C. & W. Union (Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union), local 582, was born. Its chances for a normal adolescence were already questioned due to the reason for its inception and the environment in which it was to be nurtured. Parents are, however, very determining factors in the life of any off-spring. An infant labor union was no exception. The Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union placed its destiny into the hands of a staff of nine officers with Fred G. Thornton, Sr., president, and Clarence R. Johnson, a fiery young chef, as its first secretary.

The principal reasons for the conception of local 582 of the D.C.C. & W. Union as framed in the minds of its organizers, were:

1. To elevate the living standard of Dining Car cooks and waiters.
2. Obtain a working agreement and other conditions which would insure this elevated standard.
3. To equalize existing working conditions and remove the disparity between cooks and waiters, as compared with stewards.

A seething unrest had been brewing for sometime among the cooks and waiters of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, but had not been made really vocal until the Union assumed the burden for certain grievances. The point of eruption was over the policy that all dining car employees were supposed to be working under a 240 hour per month basis. In the case of stewards this was maintained. But with cooks and waiters, they were required to work 285 hours per month to guarantee 240 hours of pay. From November, 1925 to October 1, 1926 the case of cooks and waiters had been presented before two federal agencies, interspersed with various conferences, in an attempt to get some response from railroad companies. At this period no agreement relative to working conditions existed between company and employees, hence it was not mandatory that said company should abide rigidly by any of its promises. It was not until March 10, 1928 that this agreement was made and signed by representatives of company and employees setting forth rules to govern hours and pay. During this interim--1926-28--the D.C.C. & W. Union had attempted to secure a higher rate of pay for all classes of employees under its jurisdiction. The union's representatives were successful in gaining a 5-1/2 per cent increase for all classes. This victory was two-fold; it had given the employees the recognition of choosing their own representatives; and it meant an economic consideration of \$200,000 per year to be divided among 1500 employees. And it may be said, with no attempt at braggadocio, that the present agreement with the Southern Pacific Company and its employees is considered one of the finest working agreements in operation with workers of this class.

The consolidation of white coats and aprons in the D.C.C. & W. Union did not benefit that group alone, even though that may have been its primary purpose. The Union had gained for its members: employee recognition; an established working agreement; and an increase in pay and other rights. Following in the wake of these benefits came specific gains to the railroad company. What was once a scattered horde of disgruntled workers had now become a more proficient class of employees. A tremendous annual loss (amounting to thousands of dollars) of linen, silver, and dishware resulting from carelessness or a non-interest was decreased as if by magic. What had once been considered the property of a wealthy, heartless corporation had now become the possessions--to be guarded and saved--of a paternal employer. Out of the kitchen and pantry came a higher type of service to company and public due to a more content employee personnel.

To be unionized or not unionized is a question; one fraught with many dangers and superstitions. Some men always choose to undergo hardships which they know rather than change to evils that they know not of. In 1926 the union claimed for its membership eighty men who found in unity--strength. Since that time more than eighty-two per cent of the men working in the capacity of cook or waiter for the Southern Pacific Company have joined the union. Their ranks now number more than one hundred and fifty. The small group of men who are not in the union have basked in the sunshine of its victories. The pioneers who built a shelter for themselves at the same time erected a roof over the heads of those who still questioned the union's value. Though questioning, they are sheltered from the turbulent winds of the industrial storms which beat about their workhouses built upon sands of indecision.

A single stick may be easily broken, but a bundle requires an altogether different approach. To see a handful of men acquire a clubhouse and secretary's office and purchase equipment to exceed \$5,400 in less than five years is more than fascinating. These denizens of dining coaches (many of them fathers of families) wanted a place to loaf at their idle moments where the atmosphere would be conducive of home surroundings. They did not fail. Few homes are better appointed than this workers' clubhouse where men may bring mother, wife, or sweetheart and be assured of every courtesy to her. From card table to billiard nook on the second floor to the grand piano and radio on the main--everything seems to reflect the gentle touch of the hand of a woman rather than a rendezvous of varicolored rail-riders. There is not, however, exhibited here the idle gesture of flaunting extravagance. These men have learned too well the value of the dollar. Economy is in their program. It is where expended dollars mean victory that they are turned loose unbegrudgingly. The financial cost of handling their cases involving grievances with the Southern Pacific Company exceeded \$14,000. With liberty at stake no price seemed too great.

Nor, are they content to spend and spend alone. June 10, 1930 is the red letter day of their desire to save as well as spend. The second Credit Union organization among Negroes was formed by the D.C.C. & W. Union on that day. This, by the way, is the first credit union among Negro workers in the West. Its membership in June was thirty. At this writing it has exceeded one hundred and twenty. Of this number approximately one-fourth is represented by stewards, chefs, and officials who are white. More than \$3,000 has been accumulated with approximately \$2,000 out in loans. During this interim of the Credit Union organization surplus funds have been invested in Negro enterprises such as the Liberty Building & Loan Association of Los Angeles.

Supporting this credit union plan is a woman's auxiliary with fifty members who perform a great deal of social service among the members of the union. These wives of union members have created a commissary from which they take succor to needy applicants.

Like a small boy tearing an alarm clock to pieces to see what makes it go, one is inclined to ferret out the motivating force of this organization.

On any morning between the hours of eleven and two-fifteen, at the D.C.C. & W. Union's clubhouse located at 1158 East 12th Street, Los Angeles, one may find--after cutting through a deep fog of tobacco smoke, circling heavenward--a man seated behind a desk, partially inundated with papers.

To some 400 cooks and waiters up and down the coast, a host of friends and admirers he is simply, "Clarence," a big brother and a friend. To a

great company with legion officials, small and large, he is "Clarence, the best chef on the Owl;" a man to be feared; a man to be respected. Loved by all his co-workers; feared by those who would be irregular; relentless when fighting in the cause of his constituents is Clarence R. Johnson, chef-secretary of the D.C.C. & W. Union. This man has guided its destiny since its birth. To raise a question for its successes, its accomplishments; its brilliant victories is to find in him the answer. Having worked for a decade as cook--two years as fourth and eight years as chef--for the great Southern Pacific, no man is better qualified to voice the sentiment of his followers or cope with the problem of his employers.

To know him is to believe that Negro labor can find its place in the industrial sun.

Thus, union organization, with no attempt at the fastidious, has set a new style; garbing white coats and aprons into a sturdy fabric of black cooperation.

*Opportunity*, 9 (July, 1931): 208-10.

#### 64. A SUCCESSFUL NEGRO LABOR UNION

By Rienzi B. Lemus

For three continuous, unusually hot days in May, 1920, the ever helpful New York Urban League functioned with great difficulty--but successfully--in surrendering its premises and office staff to two recently organized groups of dining car cooks and waiters seeking amalgamation. With their intense self-consciousness of the necessity of unity, given impetus, encouragement and assistance by the National Urban League, the conferees accomplished their mutual desire and the result is a successful all-Negro protective trades-union--the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees of ten locals and a Grand Lodge, presently called respectively, "councils" and "Grand Council."

From one point of view dining car service is fundamentally the most vitally important department of railroad operation because of its intimate relation to digestion, the "basis of orderly progress." And the final, successful impress of this fact upon railroad General Management is the major achievement of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees. For, hitherto, the dining car was to the General Management, a necessary "white elephant" and, like Topsy "just grewed." This *laissez faire* attitude imposed upon the great majority of essential employees (cooks and waiters) not only the burden of operation but also the status of hindmost for the devil to catch; which from the devil's point of view, left nothing to be desired!

Measured not by heights reached but distance traveled, this organization's achievements give it an important place in American Trades unionism. In three years, acting on the principle that a man best tells his story, without assistance of "labor leader" or attorney, it has lifted its membership and the Craft from nonentity to the recognized status of essential group; maintained the wage rates from 75 to 100 per cent above the pre-war level and achieved the "8-hour-day," with pay for "overtime" against formidable opposition of management; obtained sanction and respect of the Railroad Labor Board and the active moral support of the elite Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (biggest of the "Big Four" group); cooperated with the sixteen standard railroad labor unions in securing reappointment of a member of the Labor Board and in furthering the candidacy for Congress of a "Trainmen's" Vice-President to the extent of sending a Grand Officer to actively engage in the campaign among colored and white voters, and, most important of all, assured to the accused cook or waiter his "day in court" with counsel and witnesses--hitherto impossible.

Agreements governing the pay and working conditions of the cooks and waiters, now in effect on the Boston and Albany, Boston & Maine, New Haven, New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroads, East, were made by the Grand Lodge--the representative being the only non-employee admitted to a conference with the management of the Pennsylvania System (excepting the "Big Four") since the passage of the "Transportation Act, 1920." And the Agree-

ments with the Seaboard Air Line and Norfolk and Western Railroads were drafted by the Grand Lodge.

The Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees is a democratic organization; control is vested in the locals each electing three delegates to make up the Grand Lodge. Some of the locals pay sick benefits. The Organization is however, primarily and essentially a labor union; and as such, it can with modesty, claim to be successful.

*Opportunity*, 1 (May, 1923): 21.

65. STOP THESE MURDERS!

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*Chicago Defender*, January 14, 1933.

66. MURDER FOR JOBS

Negro firemen on the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad, a subsidiary of the Illinois Central, are being systematically eliminated by murder. In the past few years some score have been fired upon by unknown assassins and nine have been killed in cold blood. Each one of the remaining firemen knows that each run may be his last. And yet these men have long and honorable records of service, have wives and children to support, homes to maintain.

Unwilling to sit idly by while they are murdered one by one, these workers, through their union, have hired counsel and detectives to learn the

identity of the murderers. So far they have been unsuccessful in a large way, although some whites have been arrested and are to be brought to trial. Informed persons who have followed the course of events, are convinced that the whites who have done the shooting and killing are merely instruments; that behind them there is a sinister force supplying the inspiration and the money. It is generally believed that this force is a white firemen's union. Many white firemen, all union men, are unemployed, and what more natural than an effort to get for themselves the jobs held by Negroes?

*Pittsburgh Courier*, February 4, 1933.

#### 67. MURDER FOR THE JOB

By Hilton Butler

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*The Nation*, 137 (July 12, 1933): 44.

68. NEGRO FIREMEN

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*The Nation*, 137 (September 6, 1933): 273.

69. RAILWAY EMPLOYEES RALLY TO SAVE THEIR JOBS

By T. Arnold Hill

During recent years considerable new Federal legislation has been enacted to improve the railroads and to promote the welfare of employees working on them. Concurrently with this legislation, the condition of Negroes engaged in train and yard service has grown steadily worse. So rapid has been the replacement of Negro firemen and brakemen that if the unfair policy now in vogue continues, few will be left employed. The courts have refused to abrogate agreements between labor unions and the carriers whereby only union members will be appointed as firemen when vacancies occur. There are records of numerous discharges for trivial offenses or technical infractions of the laws, and regulations which have made the jobs of train porters burdensome and humiliating.

For more than twenty years there have been numerous efforts to check and curtail the employment of Negroes on railroads. The chief proponents of this policy are the four major railroad transportation brotherhoods, whose unions are open to "white men over twenty-one years of age." This practice of elimination by the brotherhoods reached such an extent that in 1932 white firemen on the Louisiana Division of the Illinois Central Railroad asked for a 5 per cent reduction in the number of Negro firemen. Their demands were acceded to.

an additional cut of Negro employees was later requested. This request was not immediately granted and a reign of terror set in. Negro firemen retorted to the threats of violence by saying that they preferred to "take a chance on being shot to starving to death." They were shot to death, for seven Negro switchmen, brakemen and firemen have been murdered on the job and more than ten others have been wounded.

The Pullman porters have not been without their difficulties. They, too, are losing the club cars, admittedly the best positions for "tips," to Filipinos. Even though the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is officially connected with the American Federation of Labor, the porters have struggled in vain for union recognition, for a 240-hour work month and a living wage. In this they have been fought by the company and the company's union. They have lacked the encouragement of the railroads and their alliance with the American Federation of Labor has been of little or no practical advantage. Unlike all other union train employees, the Pullman porters labor without formal union agreement between themselves and their employers.

These are but a sample of a long list of persecutions Negro railroad men have been forced to suffer. Such discriminatory methods have robbed colored workmen of one of the most lucrative occupations open to them in the South. Figures for Alabama show that there were 1,962 firemen in 1920, and only 661 in 1930. There were 590 brakemen in 1920, and only 348 in 1930. Georgia had 1,204 Negro firemen in 1920 and 878 in 1930. Throughout the South there have been losses of this character among the switchmen, brakemen and firemen.

But the various laws, commissions and boards established to improve the property and personnel relationships of the railroads have somehow managed to steer clear of responsibility in connection with Negro workers. It is for this reason that there was held recently in Chicago a conference of representatives of various organizations of Negro train and yard employees. At this conference the dining car employees, freight handlers, firemen, engineers, and yard workers were represented. From all sections of the country delegates came from unions with members of from 150 to 1,000 each. The meeting adjourned after adopting a resolution urging delegates to secure the approval of their organizations on behalf of a plan to hold a conference in Washington, D.C., for the purpose of forming a national organization of Negro railroad employees.

Significant in the proceedings were reports of delegates who told of the results in local areas that had followed protests from their union groups. "Thus," said one of them, "we did something locally that you gentlemen are here today trying to do nationally. We withdrew from the company organization and set up an independent Negro local. Out of 151 votes of all of the employees of color . . . we carried 136." This procedure will furnish railroad men the opportunity of welding into a single federation the various units or organized train men scattered through the country. Those who are advantaged by reason of successful local union organization may thus combine their experience and technique for the relief of those not so well protected and at the same time strengthen their own position.

Anything short of such an organization is to invite further losses, and ultimate elimination. There is no reason to hope that the dominant labor groups in the transportation service will rescind without coercion the historic practice of refusing membership to Negroes. There is no hope that railroad officials or governmental officials will listen to anything but a consolidated appeal. There is no other way to command public respect or make effective protest. And even if there were some other vehicle, there is no logic in remaining unorganized and, in fact, disorganized when the modern procedure for getting benefits for workers is through the instrumentality of organized effort.

*Opportunity*, 12 (November, 1934): 346,350.

PART IV

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR  
AND THE BLACK WORKER

## THE AFL AND THE BLACK WORKER

One of the key obstacles confronting black workers was their exclusion from unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and, during the 1920s and 1930s, blacks posted a long string of failures in their struggle to overcome the color bar. Most of these efforts took place at the AFL conventions and consisted of resolutions which would have required member unions to take the word "white" out of their constitutions and accept black workers as members. Should an affiliate refuse to comply, the resolutions called for the AFL Executive Council to revoke the union's charter. Normally, these resolutions were summarily dismissed by the Council on the grounds that their adoption would commit the AFL to interference with the trade autonomy of its affiliates and the federation had no such power. Technically, at least, the AFL could expel any international which refused to comply with the by-laws prohibiting racial discrimination. A two-thirds vote was required, however, and even if the resolution had passed, it was unlikely that two-thirds of the internationals would vote for expulsion of an affiliate to enforce the principle of equal membership for blacks. In short, ten years after the Great Migration from the rural South to the urban North, black industrial workers were no more able to gain admission to AFL unions than when they were farmers.

This exclusion was a serious problem in industries where a significant number of blacks were employed; blacks were forced to quit or work as scabs. Matters came to a head in 1934 and 1935 when, under severe pressure, AFL President William Green appointed a committee of five to conduct hearings around the country on the "Negro Question." The most impressive and complete presentation was made by John P. Davis, a young black Harvard graduate who served as secretary of the Joint Committee on National Recovery, a coalition of Negro organizations. He attributed the discrimination against blacks to the AFL leadership's policy of allowing local unions to "determine standards of admittance." He urged those same officials to (1) ban constitutional color bars; (2) prohibit separate Jim Crow locals; (3) abolish federal labor unions; (4) place a black on the Executive Council; (5) employ some Negro organizers and a few clerks in the headquarters office; and (6) launch a nationwide educational campaign to convince white unionists that blacks should be admitted to the union movement.

The AFL's Committee of Five, chaired by the liberal John Brophy, presented its own three-point view: (1) all international unions should take up the issue of discrimination at their next convention in order to harmonize their constitution with that of the AFL on the question of race; (2) the AFL should issue no more charters to unions practicing discrimination; (3) the AFL should begin an educational campaign to instruct white unionists on the necessity of working class unity. An alternative report was submitted by George Harrison, president of the lily-white Railway Clerks, which recommended only the educational campaign. The Executive Council of the AFL immediately voted to present the Harrison report rather than that of the Committee of Five to the 1935 convention. John Brophy, a member of the interracial United Mine Workers, resigned, charging that the Executive Council saw the committee only as a "face-saving device for the American Federation of Labor, rather than an honest attempt to find a solution of the Negro problem in the American labor movement."

The documents in Part IV reveal the recurrent struggle to open the AFL unions to blacks as well as the repeated rebuffs.

## THE A.F.L. AND THE COLOR LINE

## 1. WHITES WITHDRAW FROM FEDERATION BECAUSE OF NEGRO MEMBERS

Wants Negroes In Union Left to the Direction of  
White Union Men, Says Statement to Gompers

Jackson, Miss., Feb. 2.--Trouble is brewing in the union labor organizations in Mississippi, and withdrawal of membership from the American Federation of Labor it is said is in prospect because of the activity of the latter body in forming labor unions among Negroes in this state.

When the Mississippi branch of the Federation of Labor held its annual convention here, a goodly number of delegates were astonished to find twenty or more Negro delegates in attendance, duly accredited from local unions of carpenters, plasterers, brick layers, etc., in the principal cities of the state.

It is said that these labor unions formed by national organizers from other states, representing the American Federation of Labor, who were working in Mississippi without the knowledge or consent of the state organization.

What took place in the secret or executive sessions of the Federation has not been made public, but from reliable sources, it is learned that some very salty speeches were made on the subject, and some of the delegates threatened to withdraw their unions from affiliation with the American Federation of Labor.

A resolution was adopted and sent to President Gompers, requesting that in the future Southern labor leaders be allowed to handle Southern questions in their own way, and that organizers who are not familiar with problems in the South be kept away from this section.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, February 7, 1920.

## 2. A.F. OF L. WIPES OUT COLOR LINE; SOUTHERN DELEGATES START WAR

Montreal, June 10.--The American Federation of Labor in its annual convention here today wiped out the "color line," and warned its affiliated international unions that Negro workers must be given full and equal membership with white men.

The federation's action came at the end of a stormy session, which nearly resulted in a "race war" between delegates from the southern states and the Negroes and their sympathizers.

Rejecting the recommendations of its organization committee the federation for the first time in its history threatened the autonomy of an affiliated union by requesting the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks to give the Negro freight handlers, express and station employees full membership, and eliminate from its constitution the words "white only."

The committee's report of "non-concurrence" on the ground that the federation has no power to interfere with the constitution of an affiliated union immediately drew the fire of the Negro delegates and those of several northern states, chiefly Illinois and New York.

There was a voluminous exchange of oratory, in which the Negroes charged "taxation without representation," and "discrimination," to which their opponents replied with accusations and betrayal by Negro workers of the whites in past labor disputes.

## Negroes Indignant

Indignation of the Negro delegates was aroused several times during the debate when speakers referred to them as "nigger" freight handlers, and their

objection to such remarks was sustained by the acting chairman, James Duncan.<sup>66</sup> They charged that the use of the word "nigger" was a slander to the race.

Frank Morrison, secretary of the American Federation of Labor, made an unsuccessful attempt to halt the debate by explaining that arrangements were under way to get all unions to take in Negro members.<sup>67</sup>

Representatives of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks declared they were taking care of the Negro question and give just attention to Negro grievances. They asked the convention to leave the matter in their hands for definite disposal.

Several motions were made on the floor to demand that the railway clerks abolish the "color line" in their constitution or forfeit their charter in the federation. One of these was later modified to "request" the brotherhood to give the Negro full membership. It was accepted by an overwhelming majority.

"This, I believe, will settle the Negro problem in our organization for all time," said Chairman Duncan, following the adoption of the motion. "Our affiliated unions must now understand that the color line is abolished."

Other resolutions adopted by the convention provided for the formation of an international policemen's union as soon as membership of local unions reach 6,000; sending of representatives to Colorado, Utah and Wyoming to aid the state federation in organization work; sending of assistance to the Detroit, Mich., central body for the purpose of organizing all non-union workers in that city; an organization campaign among office workers and the granting of a charter to the International Union of Office Workers as soon as membership totals 10,000, and urged all affiliated international unions to send organizers out to unionize the laundry workers of the country.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, June 19, 1920.

### 3. "NO COLOR LINE," SAYS THE FEDERATION OF LABOR

The color line, so generously discussed in matters purely American, is but the shadow and abstract feeling of one group of American citizens expressed against another group of American citizens. No individual or class of distinction wishes to associate with an individual or thing when such an individual or thing is represented as inferior. There has been too much teaching on the part of men and institutions of superior races, societies, leadership and other factor interests to ever believe that the actions of the Federation of Labor will be of any material consequence as it regards protection and fair dealing for and with the Negro, especially when editors of papers and public speakers are persuading their people otherwise. There is no such thing as wiping out the color line; there is no such thing as destroying race feeling; there is no such thing as social equality with races. These cannot exist where races are distinct in appearance, intellectual and political advancement. This is not to argue, infer or state that equal protection is not possible or a fair measure of justice unobtainable.

The Federation of Labor, in its Montreal, Canada, meeting, declaration is to be congratulated; it certainly creates some sentiment that will encourage Negro labor to become more definitely associated with white labor and advises a more religious consideration on the part of whites to Negroes.

It is not the opinion of this publication that Negroes are generally protected by union labor organizations; they are always misunderstood by the laborers and not quite understood by corporations; thus, when they are in the union there has been, in the past, an expressed unsafety and a criticism from both interests, that of the union and corporations.

The Negro race is a 95 per cent laboring class; it produces by the sweat of its brow; it labors with its hands; it is the endurable kind, the uncomplaining and unantagonistic kind. The Negro knows he must work, steal, rob or go hungry. The latter three are not so appealing and result in more trouble than pleasure; they degrade the entire race and set at naught its civil and moral growth. The whole thing boils itself down to the one fact: that the colored man ought to be left alone; he should be allowed to organize, if he desires, among his own people, unmolested by other organizations and protected

by the concerns for which he works as well as protected by the Government of which he is a citizen or subject. There is a great deal of feeling in this country against the Negro and he had well know it, and there is a great deal of feeling on the part of the Negro against mean and malicious people who always oppose and set up hindrances that limit his progress, his comfort and well-being in America. The Negro can live happily under the law. It would be like a new emancipation if he could believe that there is such a thing as giving him protection under the law. The Federation might have had one or more things in mind; first, to wrench the Negro from the hands of protected interests, take from him his main support, snatching from capital its conservative labor, and because of that take charge of the country politically and otherwise and finally do for the Negro what other such organizations have done--get rid of him, make him subject to their beck and call, wishes and demands. It is a rather pleasing expression, even to the intelligent Negro, that there will be no "color line" in labor unions. The Negro man would do well to know every movement made by white unions and use common sense in all of his actions.

We are using here some excerpts from an editorial in *The Birmingham News* of June 12th. The *News* is not pleased with the action of the Federation of Labor in its meeting at Montreal, Canada, and makes this statement, and here hangs the trouble:

"It is exceedingly regrettable that the American Federation of Labor has deemed it either the wise or the politic thing to make a declaration on the 'color line.' For no matter how the scheme may work in other sections of the United States, it is unthinkable that Southern union locals, from time immemorial governed by white men and women, can be brayed or prayed into the union co-operation provided for at the Montreal convention."

The above paragraph is the milk in the cocoanut, and expresses largely the sentiment and true feeling of the South. The *News* is not a Negro-hating paper; it is rather charitable and encouraging in its columns respecting Negro people. The South is not going to accept the doctrine preached in Canada, it is against Southern policy. It is not a question as to whether it is right or wrong, such a thing is undebatable if it affects the rule and procedures of Southern policy, and that policy being changed with a proposition to advance the cause of the Negro, however wicked it might be.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, June 19, 1920.

#### 4. THE A.F. OF L. CONVENTION

The recent convention of the American Federation of Labor held in Denver, Colorado, was colorless except for a fight for the presidency between Gompers and John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America. The Convention opposed trade with Russia; refused to condemn the unspeakable Ku Klux Klan; ratified Gompers' withdrawal from the Amsterdam Labor International; closed the door in the faces of Negroes and women; re-elected its archaic pilots; then adjourned.<sup>68</sup>

The only hopeful sign was the fight on Gompers; not that Lewis was a whit better but because now the organization is still, dead--and if once you can get it to move, to revive, there is a chance of getting it to move in the right direction.

The American labor movement still lags.

*The Messenger*, 3 (August, 1921): 226.

#### 5. A MESSAGE TO NEGRO WORKERS

By Samuel Gompers

With the Negro becoming a more and more important factor in the industrial life of the nation, it is of increasing importance that he be organized trade into



unions, not only for his own benefit but for the benefit of all labor as well.

If the Negro is not organized, he will tend to hamper the onward march of his white brothers and be an influence in holding back the improvement of the condition of American toilers in every state. In the past, the Negro has only too frequently been used by the employers to break strikes and to beat down wages in our industrial centers. The Negro could not have been used in this way if he had been organized and infused with the point of view of the working people of the United States. Hence the vital importance of pushing organization work among the Negro workers of all trades and industries.

The American Federation of Labor is doing its best to advance organization work among the Negroes and it seeks the help of all forward-looking men and women in this task. The Federation is striving in every way to live up to the purpose repeatedly declared at its conventions, that of organizing all wage earners without regard to class, race, religion, sex or politics.

As I have pointed out before, Labor Day is the real Emancipation day for the Negro, for it signifies the dignity of labor and the organization of the working people, with their consequent ability to win freedom and happiness for themselves. As the Negro forms strong labor organizations, he will more and more win a real emancipation for himself and take his rightful place in the ranks of those who do the world's useful work.

*The Messenger*, 5 (September, 1923): 809.

#### 6. TO THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

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## Content removed at rightsholder's request.

*The Crisis*, 28 (August, 1924): 153-54.

### 7. THE A.F. OF L.'S CONVENTION

At the coming A.F. of L. Convention in El Paso, Texas, the Negro workers should begin again their drive to get the Federation to go on record for a vigorous campaign for the organization of the Negro workers into the trade union movement. Of course, they will have rough sledding down in Texas, of which one cynic said: "If he owned with Hell, he would rent out Texas and live in Hell." Still "Ma" Ferguson routed the Ku Klux Klan there. Think of it! a woman in Texas has become the Governor by defeating that sinister gang of red-handed murderers, the Klan. The Negro workers can depend on support from the delegation from the International Ladies' Garment Workers, the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union, the International Fur Workers' Union, the Bakers' Union and Painters' Unions of New York City and Brooklyn. But even if they don't get any support from anybody, they should go to the bat and carry the fight to the floor for recognition as the industrial equals of their white brothers. It is not sufficient merely for Negroes to condemn the white workers for their economic ills, for they are not altogether guiltless themselves.<sup>69</sup>

*The Messenger*, 6 (December, 1924): 374.

### 8. THE FREIGHT HANDLERS

By Esther Lowell

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.--Four Negro freight handlers, delegates to the 15th annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, have a serious problem for the federation's attention. Their local unions, 4 out of 89 in a similar predicament, are chartered directly by the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees' agreements with employers.

#### Union Maintains Color Ban

The Brotherhood's constitution expressly states that all white persons employed in the lines of work under their jurisdiction are eligible to membership in the union. Negro workers are not admitted, altho they pay 50¢ to the Brotherhood in addition to the 25¢ per capita to the American Federation of Labor. Negroes are not permitted to participate in Brotherhood meetings or share in insurance and other Brotherhood benefits aside from equal conditions for white and colored freight handlers. Negroes are not allowed to become clerks.

#### Couldn't Get Audience

Ben Oglesby, president Local No. 17769, and Albert C. Campbell, president Local no. 17775, both of Kansas City, Mo., two of the Negro delegates in Atlantic City, say they attempted to get an audience at the last convention of the Brotherhood but could not get beyond the door and found no delegate to present their resolution asking for removal of the color line in the Brotherhood constitution. William McGibney, president Local No. 16900, Greensboro, N.C., and Samuel Blockman of Cleveland, Ohio, are the two other delegates from colored freight handlers' local unions to the American Federation of Labor convention.

All four Negro delegates signed the resolution presented to the convention, calling for the American Federation of Labor to approve their proposal that

President Green and whoever else he chooses from the American Federation of Labor officials negotiate with the Grand Lodge of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks "for the full admission to membership for all classes under their jurisdiction as granted by the American Federation of Labor." In the event negotiations should fail, the Negro freight handlers call upon the American Federation of Labor to "take the necessary actions to properly protect the welfare of that class of railway employees."

Only two Negro delegates attended the El Paso convention last year and none at the American Federation of Labor Portland convention in 1923. No other Negro unionists are represented at the Atlantic City convention.

The four Negro freight handlers are staying in the pleasure city's north side, the district away from the oceanside which has long been claimed by whites. Negro workers are plentiful in Atlantic City, along the boardwalk, in hotels and restaurants, and colored nursemaids ride in the ever-present boardwalk wheel chair with their white wards and sometimes with their white mistresses. But when a white girl stops the colored delegates to the American Federation of Labor convention for an interview on the boardwalk the idle white population sitting on the piers or passing by, gape at the sight.

*Daily Worker*, October 10, 1925.

#### 9. A.F. OF L. UNIONS ADMIT COLORED WORKERS

Not in years has the American Federation of Labor been so interested in the organization of colored workingmen as now. Undoubtedly the recent "left wing" Negro Labor Congress held in Chicago is mainly responsible for the new drive. In order to checkmate any movement to organize the negroes outside their body, A.F. of L. officials immediately took steps to encourage organization by their regular unions.

Advocates of admitting negro workers to membership in A.F. of L. unions allege that it is far safer to bring the great horde of unskilled and semi-skilled negro labor into the trade union movement rather than to allow a vast pool of potential colored strike-breakers to form outside the confines of the regular movement. Northern building trades have for some time allowed colored men to enter the unions, and the color line is now being dropped in many other A.F. of L. unions where it was formerly a bar. This movement is largely a matter of self-protection, since in trades where negro labor is commonly employed all workingmen, regardless of their skins, have a community of interest in opposing open shop and anti-union drives and in preventing the formation of a great reserve of low-wage labor to menace the high wages and good working conditions enjoyed by the organized workers.

*Locomotive Engineerings Journal*, 59 (December, 1925): 908.

#### 10. LETTER TO MR. HUGH FRAYNE, FEBRUARY 1926.

New York City  
February 1926

Mr. Hugh Frayne, General Organizer  
American Federation of Labor  
1452 Broadway  
Suite 701  
New York City

My dear Mr. Frayne:

It is a matter of common knowledge that the number of Negroes in the trades and industries has increased during the past fifteen years to the point

where they constitute an important economic factor in many of the cities of the North. They have added a half million or more to the general movement from rural to urban communities, leaving the unorganized farming industry to compete with the workers in organized trades and industries. With immigration so greatly curtailed they are the one dependable labor supply for American manufacturers, for which they have already demonstrated remarkable fitness. Thus the migration from the South continues with indications of a very intake this spring and summer.

From 1910 to 1920 colored workers in the trades and mechanical industries increased fifty per cent and it is likely that the rate of increase since 1920 has been larger. Here then, is a fertile field for either capital or labor. The one that sows the seed, will reap the harvest.

Many of these men and women are already working for wages that are far below the standard set for the occupations in which they are engaged. They are thus endangering the health and happiness of their own families, but more than this, they are endangering the reforms which the labor movement has sacrificed to achieve in order to benefit wage-earners everywhere. If this state of affairs continues, the rapid strides made by Negroes in industry will break the hold of white men and ultimately lead to confusion and destruction within the ranks of organized labor. We are just as eager as the leaders of the A.F. of L. that communistic tendencies shall distort the minds of Negro workers. But we cannot ignore the probability of this unfortunate state when communists are taking initiative, with Negro leaders in the front, to annex Negro members to their numbers.

We are mindful of the resolutions of the American Federation of Labor declaring a liberal and democratic attitude toward all races, but the discriminatory practises of certain influential national organizations of the American Federation of Labor have had the effect of nullifying the good intentions which these resolutions avow. Nevertheless it is possible to get a sympathetic hearing among Negroes on the matter of participation in the trade union movement. At least a few of our leaders are willing to advocate the principle of collective action. The efforts at unionizing Negroes in the Pullman Porters' Organization, the successful operations of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees, the Negro membership in the locals of the national organizations connected with the American Federation of Labor and the work of the Trade Union Committee for organizing Negroes--all these have produced a public sentiment among Negroes far more favorable than ever before to the acceptance of the American Federation of Labor and its component organizations.

To this end we submit the following recommendations;

1. That the American Federation of Labor officially endorse and support the work of the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers.<sup>70</sup>

2. That the American Federation of Labor employ a capable colored executive, preferably a trade unionist, who will have the privilege of sitting with the council to handle the labor problems of the American Federation of Labor incident to Negro wage-earners. It is suggested that

- (a) the duties of such an executive would include the establishment of organization in other cities patterned after the New York Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers;
- (b) that the executive be allowed to assist in the adjustment of racial problems faced by the various National and International Organizations of the A.F. of L.;
- (c) that the work of the executive have the counsel and review or a body of representatives from organizations interested in organizing Negroes, the same to be created for this purpose.

That the American Federation of Labor make every effort to secure the much-to-be-desired affiliation of the existing Negro Trade union organizations. That such an affiliation of the existing Negro Trade union organizations, and that such an affiliation will do much to promote mutual respect and confidence between non-union Negro workers and the A.F. of L. cannot be denied. It is our earnest hope that the American Federation of Labor will be able to bring this about.

Very truly yours,  
(Signed)

A. Phillip Randolph, General Organizer of  
the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

Rienzi B. Lemus, President, the Grand <sup>71</sup>  
Council of the Brotherhood of Dining Car  
Employees

Henry Haummel, Treasurer, Professional  
Club

Frank R. Crosswaith, Secretary, Trade  
Union Committee for Organizing Negro  
Workers

Gertrude E. McDougald, Member of the  
Executive Board of the Trade Union  
Committee for Organizing Negro Workers

James Weldon Johnson, Secretary, National  
Association for the Advancement of Colored  
People

T. Arnold Hill, Director, Department of  
Industrial Relations, National Urban  
League

Victor A. Olander Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

#### 11. NEGROES ASKED TO JOIN UNIONS; A.F.L. INACTIVE

##### Study Shows Internationals Are Inactive

While the American Federation of Labor still fails to interest itself actively in the plight of the Negro worker, many local unions and district councils continue to enlist Negro members.

T. Arnold Hill, research worker in the industrial relations department of the National Urban League, reaches this conclusion after an intensive study of this field. He declares sentiment favoring Negro membership in trade unions is growing.

In Atlanta, Ga., labor union officials have recorded their opinion that "The labor movement in Atlanta does not feel safe with Negroes out of the union," writes Hill. They have expressed a desire to organize Negroes in auxiliary unions in certain trades.

##### Building Laborers Loyal

"In Philadelphia where 2,500 tobacco workers are employed, efforts are being made to secure their membership" in the union. "Ninety per cent of the hod carriers and building laborers in Kansas City, are Negroes. They remained loyal to the union during a carpenters' strike in July."

Hill mentions that colored motion picture operators have been admitted to the union in New York City; relates the progress of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; tells of colored workers in the New York cloakmakers' and paper box strikes; and of colored women date workers striking in Chicago.

"In Columbia, S.C., the number of colored plumbers and electricians increased, these trades being those in which very rigid restrictions prevail against colored membership," he recounts. "In Chicago an electrical workers' union made concessions to colored electricians. . . . In Philadelphia and Harrisburg efforts were made to organize building trades workers and in Atlantic City colored waiters were sought for union membership."

##### A.F. of L. Refuses to Act

"Against these favorable conditions there are a number of instances which show that considerable prejudice still exists against Negro membership in trade unions," states Hill.

"An attempt to get the American Federation of Labor, through its executive council, to appoint a colored advisor and organizer failed. The metal lathers' union denied a charter to colored men in Chicago. None of the international trade unions, which refused membership to Negroes at the beginning of the year changed its policy."

The National Urban League is a Negro social welfare organization largely interested in helping Negro workers get into new and more skilled kinds of work.

*Daily Worker*, February 19, 1927.

## 12. THE A.F. OF L. AND THE NEGRO

The International Labor News Service is a propaganda medium of the American Federation of Labor. Joseph A. Wise, member of the Typographical Union No. 16 of Chicago, is one of its most active correspondents, specializing in malicious anti-Communist slanders.

This much needs to be understood in order to properly rate the vicious attack on an "inter-racial dance" given by the Young Workers (Communist) League in Chicago, written by Wise and sent out by the I.L.N.S., in which it is declared that:

"The male part of the crowd was largely made up of Negroes, with a sprinkling of Whites, Chinese, Filipinos, Mexican Indians and mongrels."

The A.F. of L. propaganda that slanders the unity of the five races clearly explains the obstacle that the Green-Well regime is today in the effort to build the solidarity of the American working class that is constituted of all these races. The clipping that came to the *Daily Worker* was taken from the Colorado Labor Advocate, the official organ of the Colorado State Federation of Labor, also of the Denver Trades and Labor Assembly. It no doubt appeared in many other A.F. of L. organs. Two other interesting paragraphs are as follows:

"Two large banners bearing the following slogans conspicuously adorned the walls: 'Full social equality for Negroes,' and 'Fight against race prejudice.'"

"These slogans epitomize the inducement held out to men of the colored races to join the Communist Party."

Since the A.F. of L. thus reveals itself as being opposed to the fight against race prejudice, it must be in favor of race prejudice, with its Jim Crow laws, the segregation of Negroes and really revealing the reason why the A.F. of L. takes no steps to organize Negro workers, in fact discriminates against them on every hand. It takes its stand with the lynchers, who hang and burn in the name of social inequality, for the preservation of so-called "white supremacy."

The A.F. of L. news service indicates that it feels political and economic equality are sufficient. But these are the masks under which the A.F. of L. completely betrays the Negro working class. In this article the A.F. of L. has completely unmasked itself insofar as its real attitude toward the Negro is concerned. Here is enough to blast every hypocritical utterance on the Negro question that may ever come from the lips of President William Green or Vice President Matthew Wall.<sup>72</sup>

*Daily Worker*, April 9, 1929.

## 13. A.F. OF L. IS OPENLY AGAINST NEGRO LABOR

The policy of the A.F. of L. from the time of Sam Gompers (remember his infamous defense of mob rule against Negro workers?) has been one of open antagonism to the Negro workers. Prejudice, race hatred, discrimination in the union and on the job--all the forms of the ideology of race hatred of the

white ruling class--mark the dealings of the A.F. of L. leadership with the Negro workers. The A.F. of L. leadership encourages Jim Crow unions. Most of the A.F. of L. unions have color bars! Where these racial bars have been removed such removal was effected by the left wing workers in those unions, who alone have agitated and fought against those color bars and other devices of barring Negro workers from the benefits of trade union organization.

#### Left Wing Unions Fight Jim Crowism

And now, again, the left wing workers lead the fight against the Jim Crow policies of the A.F. of L.--against the bosses' ideology of Negro inferiority and race separation which the A.F. of L. leadership so faithfully defends! No longer content with merely carrying on inside the A.F. of L., the fight for working class solidarity (unity of all workers, black and white), and for the militant waging of the class struggle, the left wing workers are building new unions and a new labor center. Already affiliated with this new labor center are over half a million workers. The new left wing unions are easily differentiated from the A.F. of L. unions by the following facts:

1. The left wing unions seek to organize the black and white workers in the same unions and locals on a basis of absolute equality, full participation in leadership and equal opportunities on the job.

2. All the left wing unions have Negro workers on their executive committees. In addition, the vice-president of the National Miners' Union is a Negro, the Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union has a Negro vice-president, Chas. Henry Rosemond.

3. The National Textile Union, which is leading the strike of textile workers in South Carolina, refused to retreat on its principle of race equality and in the face of the most vicious attacks of the capitalist press, which worked the race issue overtime in its efforts to turn the white strikers against the N.T.U., the union won its point and against the capitalist-injected prejudice of the Southern workers, won these strikers to its principle that the Negro textile workers must be organized side by side with the white textile workers and that there must be absolute equality within the union. And won them so completely that the white strikers were not only willing to accept a Negro organizer of the union, but learning that his wife was threatened by the ku kluxers and chamber of commerce, appointed a bodyguard to protect him. And, when, following the unprovoked attack by the police on the strikers' meeting and the shooting of the chief of police, the mill bosses' police and thugs tried to lynch this Negro organizer, the white strikers mobilized and spirited him out of town, putting him on a train for New York forty miles from Gastonia. This left wing union was denounced and attacked by the capitalist press of the South for its race equality policy. And, of course, the A.F. of L. joined to attack. But the N.T.N. stuck to its guns and achieved a notable victory against the bosses ideology of race separation and antagonism in the very center of reaction, in the South itself! As a result of its stand on the race issue, fourteen of its organizers are today menaced with the electric chair, following a frame-up by the mill bosses in connection with the shooting of the chief of police.

The United Textile Workers Union, an A.F. of L. outfit, is also conducting strikes in the South. But the capitalist press, finds no necessity for attacking the U.T.W. on the race issue. Nor will the mill bosses and their police agents find any necessity for framing the U.T.W. organizers to stop their advocacy of race equality. The U.T. W. is not advocating race equality. It is not even trying to organize Negro workers. Its policy on the race issue is the same as the bosses' policy.

The Trade Union Educational League is building a new trade union center for all the workers. Among the leaders of the T.U.E.L. are workers of all races, Negro, white, Japanese, Chinese, etc.<sup>73</sup>

The Trade Union Educational League is holding a national trade union unity convention in Cleveland on August 31. Already hundreds of delegates have been elected to this convention, among them a very large percentage of Negro workers.

The League invites you to send delegates to this convention. You should get your Brotherhood to send delegates, but you must realize that your leaders, who are now under the use every scheme and devise to defeat your wishes in this respect, as control of Green and company, will in all others calling for the unity of the working class and a militant struggle against the exploiters.

*Daily Worker*, August 3, 1929.

14. SOLVING AMERICA'S RACE PROBLEM

By Walter White

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*The Nation*, 128 (January 9, 1929): 42-3/

15. METAL TRADES DEPARTMENT

American Federation of Labor

Washington, D.C.  
January 10, 1929

Mr. William English Walling,<sup>76</sup>  
Greenwich, Conn.

Dear Walling:

Your letter with Walter White's article in THE NATION, reached me yesterday. Not being certain of the address through which I could reach you immediately, I am sending this letter to your Greenwich, Conn. address and also the City Club.

I read what Mr. White wrote with utter amazement. Not only does the article thoroughly misrepresent, but it carries something with it of vital injury to both the negro and the American Federation of Labor.

In its misrepresentation it is similar to other articles relative to the Negro and our trade union movement which THE NATION has published in the past.

You may recall my reference sometime ago to an article by Doctor Du Bois in THE NATION which was so inaccurate and untruthful concerning the Molders' Union, that I took up the matter with the editor of THE NATION and finally force a retraction.

I assume that Mr. Walter White attended the meeting at which I spoke. If I am correct, then I would not stoop to reply to him, for what he wrote in THE NATION places him beneath contempt. Fortunately there was a stenographer at the meeting, and I understand that I am to have a copy of my remarks. I may take these and find some means of reproducing the full address. That would be by far the most satisfactory way of dealing with the viciously inaccurate statement published by THE NATION.

I am enclosing condensed write-up of my remarks which our mutual friend Chester M. Wright prepared for the International Labor Press service.

I might add for your information that at the close of my remarks I called attention to the several appeals which I had made to representative leaders of the negro race, urging them to make some public statement advising negroes to become members of trade unions, and that up to the present time not a single one of these leaders had made any such public statement. I then expressed the hope that some of the leaders who were present would assist the American trade union movement in organizing negroes by publicly advising them to become trade unionists.

With kindest, personal regards

Sincerely and cordially yours,

Secretary-Treasurer

William English Walling Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

#### 16. ATTEMPTS TO ORGANIZE NEGRO WORKERS

John P. Frey  
Secretary, Metal Trades Department

The National Interracial Conference was held in Washington, in December, 1928, under the auspices of a number of organizations with social programs. Mary Van Kleeck was chairman. John P. Frey, representing the American Federation of Labor, spoke at an evening session. His address was extemporaneous and is published because of forthright statement of the problems involved in the organization of negro workers.--Editor.

It is a privilege at a conference such as this to discuss a question which is apparently not thoroughly understood, one that is surrounded with some conditions which guide people to speak delicately and gently as they discuss it.

I want to thank the previous speaker for making it easier for me when he expressed the thought in a very apt way a moment ago, that sometimes we make use of "highbrow reasons" to explain just why we do things.

I realize the fact that the subject which I want to present tonight must not be discussed in a high brow manner, or from a high brow point of view, but rather from the lessons which experience has taught us and the facts which we must face, if we are to deal with the problem intelligently, constructively and successfully.

I have lived long enough to find that it is an easy matter for a lazy person to indulge in quite brilliant destructive criticism, and that sometimes in discussing these larger questions there is more of an inclination to destructive criticism than there is to a patient, evenly balance examination of a problem and then an effort at something constructive in the way of proposal.

Naturally, this evening my mind is occupied principally with the part which the negro plays in the American trade-union movement, and I believe that you would be disappointed, and you would feel that I had imposed upon your time, if I did not make that my principal theme.

But before discussing the negro as a wage-earner, and the part which he plays in the American trade-union movement, it is necessary to call attention to this fact: that the racial problem in this country, so far as the trade-union movement is concerned, is not a negro problem in particular. It is a problem which equally affects large numbers of others.

I have among my acquaintances and among my friends those who belong to different racial groups, and I want to assure you as a trade-union official that every complaint which I ever heard from negroes, every ground which seemed to give them justification for complaint, has been called to my attention by Jewish friends who were wage-earners, by Polish friends, by Italian friends, by Russian friends. So that the problem, as far as racial conditions and the American trade-union movement are concerned, is not confined to any one race. It is one which applies to all of the races we have in our country who belong to those groups from Central and Southern Europe and the Near East.

I have come into contact with the problem of the negro so far as its social side is concerned, and also in its economic side, and both have tremendously interested me.

For some thirty years I have tried to understand the problem created by the presence of different races in our country. I have taken some part in the American trade-union movement in shaping policy, so that what I will tell you or refer to may, perhaps, be understood a little more sympathetically.

I would like to say that I am the first officer of my union, and perhaps one of the first in the American trade-union movement, to organize a union composed exclusively of negroes working at their trade in a Southern State. I did that almost thirty years ago, after having to meet that social prejudice which we encounter in the South. This union which I had the privilege of organizing, was created in the First African Methodist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The American trade-union movement, or to be specific, the American Federation of Labor, is criticized at times because of the methods it adopts in endeavoring to organize the negro wage-earner, and because of an alleged failure to give him the opportunity of working into the more highly skilled trades, and further because there is said to be a policy on the part of our trade-union movement to adopt certain general measures relative to organizing negroes, and then to find ways of evading their practical application.

I think it will be acknowledged immediately, that so far as the social aspects of the racial problem are concerned; the trade-union movement had nothing to do with establishing those prejudices which exist, not only against the colored men in this country, but against that whole group which we call the foreign. I do not know exactly who the "foreigner" is, but we do seem to have prejudices in this country against those whom we call foreigners, and those prejudices which exist had their origin before we had an American Federation of Labor.

The American Federation of Labor should be credited at least with this: that it has gone further up-to-date than a large number of Christian churches because the American Federation of Labor and the great majority of the affiliated national unions, not only organized the negro, but brought him into the white man's union. The organization in which I hold my membership has insisted that when the negro joined the union he stood in the union with all of the other members, and that there was nothing in the nature of segregation, although a number of the Protestant members of the Molders' Union on Sunday went to their church, while the colored brothers went to another of the same denomination.

I bring out this fact, not in the nature of any criticism of the churches, because I realize that they have a problem, and that the greater minds in the churches are struggling with it. I call attention to it, rather so that you can realize that there are some criticisms made against the American trade-union movement failing to have sufficiently high ideals, but that so far as the practice goes, leaving ideals to one side, they have made headway more rapidly than a number of our Christian denominations.

However, it is not the social aspect of the problem, and it is not the racial aspect of the problem, that interests either the American trade-union movement or myself. The problem with which we find ourselves compelled to deal is an economic one.

It is immaterial whether an article is manufactured in a sweat shop in New York City by Russians or whether it is manufactured in Birmingham, Alabama, by negroes. Its market value is not determined by who the workers were who made it, but upon the character of the product, and that is what determines its price. We do not get a lower price because a piece of furniture was made by a Pole or made by an Italian.

Dealing with economic problems we have come into contact with this one condition which must also be borne in mind, if we are to have any practical understanding of the problem.

There are races in this country, or the racial groups who are not quite so thoroughly Americanized as some others--I do not know how to define this with definiteness or precision, but we say there are those groups, anyway--seem to suffer from a condition very much as the Israelites suffered from a similar condition when they apparently were confined very largely to nothing but brick making in the Valley of the Nile. They are looked upon as aliens. They have different social and religious customs and traditions, and they are inclined more or less to segregate themselves, not because the community desires that they shall do that, but because they find that by grouping themselves they secure the common protection and safety which is found in numbers and which they cannot get when they are in a community where they are not already well established as individuals. That is what we find. That is why I am glad to have the opportunity of discussing it with you.

We find that the racial groups in this country suffer partly because they have professional leaders; that these racial groups are exploited very frequently by some of the keener minds among their own.

I only need to call attention to the padrone system which existed in this country only a few years ago which practically made it impossible for the Italian immigrant to work in a community unless the padrone secured his position for him, and unless the padrone received a price for doing that. In other words, there was built up the racial labor boss. The racial labor boss secured his footing very largely because of the standing he had with the large employers of labor in the community and with the political leaders.

And so directly in connection with this effort to organize the negro and other races, we have come into contact with the boss of the racial group whose interest apparently was not so much the welfare of his racial group as it was the personal advantage which he derived because he controlled them and exploited them. One reason that the trade-union organization among those racial groups in our country has failed to make more rapid progress, and fails to make the progress it should today, is because these misleaders of their own racial groups use their influence to prevent the members of these races from becoming members of a trade-union organization.

The negro has much the same problem which other races have who are not quite so much Americans as those whose ancestors came over a greater number of years before.

I have the greatest of sympathy with the leaders, the true leaders of the negro, as I have with the negro race, in endeavoring to work their way out of the position in which they find themselves.

I came into contact many years ago with a man who I have always believed was as great a leader, as great a constructive mind, as the negro race has produced in this country. I have talked with him; I have corresponded with him, and at one time I had to battle with him a little bit, and if I understood his viewpoint it was this: that whether a man is colored or not, if he occupies a subordinate position in the nation's affairs, if he is semi-skilled or unskilled labor, he must become skilled labor before he can demand the recognition to which he is entitled.

This great leader--you can infer whom I have in mind--did all that he could to give the Southern negro an opportunity of learning a trade, so that from being an unskilled worker--there is such a thing as an unskilled worker--he could become a mechanic, command the wages which skill brings, elevate his standard of living and make good, because he had placed himself on a higher plane.

It was a very difficult thing for this leader to accomplish, because while his proposition was practical and one with which I was in full agreement, the difficulty came in finding employers who would give the negro in the South the opportunity of becoming a mechanic.

And so it was necessary for him to talk in a heart-to-heart way with some of the representatives of the large industries in the South who would give the negro this opportunity. He succeeded in one important instance; and it so happened that I was in the same vicinity trying to do some organizing work at the same time. This is what occurred. It could not help but occur. I am bringing it out without one word or thought of criticism, because I appreciate the problem. I am bringing out what occurred so that you may have a better understanding of the problem facing the American trade-union movement in its effort to organize the negro workers.

A very large corporation in the South, not so many hundred miles from Washington, employed patternmakers, molders, machinists, boilermakers, blacksmiths, and a number of the woodworking trades. They were willing to give the negro an opportunity. When I visited the plant about 25 years ago there were some two thousand negroes employed, and of that number over 200 had become what are called mechanics. They graduated from the laborer class and had become mechanics. They were competent to teach other negroes. It was a very satisfactory working out of the program which this great colored leader believed so absolutely essential.

But obligations came along with it. We are all prone to demand our rights, and to dodge some of the responsibilities which go with them.

This leader could not dodge his responsibilities. The large corporation was unwilling that there should be any trade-in organization. One reason that they were willing to give the negro an opportunity of learning a trade was an effort to remove a condition in their plant which might lead to trade-union organization and so it became necessary for this leader, when he visited this plant every year, to tell his colored brothers how much they owed this corporation because of the opportunity which was given them to become mechanics; that in connection with that obligation it followed that their general attitude throughout the year must not only be to give a good return for the wages received, but not to adopt any policy which would make the corporation feel that it had made a mistake in permitting the negro to become a mechanic.

In other words, the "soft pedal" was put on any effort on their part to organize.

I cannot blame this great leader for taking that position. I think, had I been in his place, I might have done the same thing, because in the South no other large corporation would give negroes an opportunity to become mechanics if they suspected that after they had become mechanics they would immediately organize and demand the trade-union scale of wages. That was a practical condition.

This brings me back to the union I organized in Chattanooga, Tennessee; and I am referring to it so that we may all understand the reasons which have moved in the matter of organizing the negro.

In Chattanooga, at the time that I organized this first union of colored molders which was ever organized, there were about 350 or 400 white molders working in the city, and there were about the same number of negro molders. In a few of the foundries they were what is called "mixed." They both worked under the same roof, but with negroes on one side and whites on the other. In some of the foundries they were all white and in some of the others they were all colored.

First of all I had to convince the members of my own union that the question was not a social one, that it was purely an economic one; that a casting made by a negro molder was just as good as a casting made by a white molder; that it brought the same price in the market, and that the purpose of our trade was not to establish class distinction; but was to protect molders in the economic field by seeing that the competition of one group of men did not result in lowering standards which had been established by another, and although they did everything but throw me out of meeting room--and I thought

they would do that when I first broached the subject--finally they yielded, but it was necessary to have the negro molders meet for organizing purposes in the First African Methodist Church in Chattanooga.

When I talked with the leaders of the negro molders I found them intelligent men. I found that their having learned a trade, having become craftsmen, being able to do better for their families than they had before they received a skilled man's wages, had given them a broader viewpoint. Then perhaps these men were also among the most energetic of their race in Chattanooga, willing to take a chance, willing to be pioneers. I thought a great deal of this local union and of its members. We all like to be the one to start something. And so I spent much time with them. As I would pass through Chattanooga I would always stop over and see them.

About six months after the organization of this local union, I received a letter from the officers telling me that a special meeting had been called, and that I must be present. The president of the local union, who was a lay preacher in the Methodist Church, and quite able to express himself, opened the meeting. He said that he hoped I would not misunderstand their position, but that they had finally reached the conclusion that it was not possible for them to have a union. He said, "It is about like this: the foundrymen have told us that they do not want any union, and if we keep on they are going to discharge some of them and if we are discharged how are they going to work as molders any other place in the South? If we remain active in the union we will lose our positions; and then, besides, we think that you white molders are always going to fight for higher wages, for shorter hours, and when you do get higher wages or when you get shorter hours, then the foundrymen who have to give us a little more to keep us from organizing."

And so they surrendered their local union for the reasons they gave.

I have no criticism for those men, none in the least. I understood the situation that they were in. They had built up something in that community which was different from any other foundry center in the South. They had come to the point where they could see an open rupture with the foundrymen. They doubted whether they could hold their own. They were unwilling to lose what they had already won, and so they took the position that the most important thing for them to do was to think of their own welfare first. I can understand the situation thoroughly, and I am calling attention to it, not to find any fault, because I have none to find, but to make it plain that the problem which the trade-union movement faces in endeavoring to organize the race in this country is not so simple as it may appear on the surface, and that when some people seriously or lightly state that we are not sincere, and that we are not performing our duty, it is rather because they fail to understand what the facts really are.

It is true that there have been unions that discriminated against colored workers, and it is true that they have discriminated against other so-called foreign workers, and it is equally true that they have discriminated against that type of American who says, "I go back fifty or a hundred years, and I am a little better American than you are." There is discrimination throughout the entire industrial field. There is no group in this country that I know of subject to more discrimination at the present time than the members of the American Federation of Labor. Huge employers' organizations comprising all of the leading firms in some of our industries have staffs of employers whose sole work is to destroy what trade-union organization we have to date and to prevent our getting any more.

When it comes to this field of discrimination in industry, it is not confined to the negro; it is not confined to the Jew or the Pole or the Italian, or any one else. The so-called thorough-going American is just as subject to it. That is another phase of the problem to which consideration must be given.

The trade unions years ago limited apprentices, and without attempting to give you any highbrow reasons, the fact remains that the trade unions did not desire to see the market overloaded. The best proof that they were right was the effort of a number of manufacturers' associations, about 1904 or 1905, to found schools where a young man received a sheepskin which informed the employing world that he was a first-class molder or patternmaker or machinist when he had worked in the school a little while. They did that because they feared that the American Federation of Labor would have a monopoly of the employees, and they did not want that.

So the action of the American trade-union movement was a protective measure. The American trade-union movement spent a lot of money and made a lot of sacrifices to build up an improved condition; and I am not certain whether the trade-union in certain instances is not ethically sound in making certain limitations.

Let me give you an illustration, because I am not trying to defend the American trade-union movement. I never do. I only endeavor to interpret. If its record is not sufficient to justify its existence it would be a waste of time trying to defend it.

In the city of New York, about eighteen or twenty years ago, the members of a craft who are as highly skilled a group as we have in the industries, had built up a quite thorough-going trade union, not only in New York City, but in Brooklyn, Newark and Elizabethport, the whole industrial belt in the New York City area. They had established satisfactory hours and they had reasonably satisfactory wages. About that time a number of foreign craftsmen came into that district and were employed as superintendents. Not long after these superintendents had taken charge of the shops, foreign craftsmen began to come to New York with union cards of their own unions in their native land to show that they were trade-unionists in good standing, and they began to go to work.

Gradually the men who had met the expense, done the organizing and made sacrifices to build up more satisfactory conditions, were being edged out, and the other men who had made no contributions up to that time were taking their place.

Of course, ideals are essential things, but sometimes we must have protection. So the members of this union in New York raised the initiation fee, and said, "No member of our trade can work in these shops without paying this initiation fee."

It was like the effort of a group of men who, going out into the wilderness as pioneers, clear the land and begin to grow crops and have gardens, taking the position that there is plenty of room for other pioneers--"let them come; but in our own clearing, that is the place where they can visit but not carry on their operations."

The American workman has to protect himself, and at times he has been compelled to restrict members of his own group, and I think that in doing so very often he has been ethically sound.

There is a problem of unemployment. I listened with much pleasure this morning to what was being said about the negro getting into the better paying positions, more skilled ones; and I presume, of course, that the position which the American trade-union movement would take on that would be the position it would take as to anybody, because we draw no distinction of race, nationality or creed. Our principles apply to every one alike.

The American trade-union movement, made up of skilled men, have this problem on their hands: They are being permanently put out of business. This wonderful industrial transformation we are going into, of replacing skilled knowledge and manual dexterity by machinery and mechanical processes, is putting skilled men permanently out of the industries.

For instance: we are told by our Department of Commerce that within eight years, or since 1910, there have been 240,000 railway men in the transportation service who have been eliminated; and they also inform us that at the present time, with 240,000 less, our railway systems are hauling more ton miles and passenger miles than they did in 1920. There is reason to believe that the number of railway operating employees will be further reduced, and at the same time much more will be transported by the railroads.

So here are 240,000 permanently thrown out of the one field where they had prepared themselves to earn wages higher than those paid to unskilled men.

What is true of the railway men is true particularly in the skilled trades. I know in my own organization there are probably 50 per cent less skilled men employed than there were when I became an apprentice boy, and yet the volume of castings has increased enormously. The Department of Commerce tells us that during the same period I referred to a moment ago, 917,000 less wage-earners have been employed in our manufacturing industries, although these industries are producing more today than they were eight years ago.

Take one illustration which shows the tendency. I knew the Mr. Owens who invented the Owens Glass Bottle Blowing Machine. I remember going to his machine shop in Toledo when he was working on it, 25 years ago. The glass bottle blowers of that day were fairly well paid, and were a highly skilled group of men. The Owens Glass Bottle Blowing Machine is an automatic machine.

Human labor cannot even direct it. There has to be a man to stop it if something goes wrong, but it works automatically or not at all. There is a large group of men permanently thrown out into the discard.

New industries are springing up. We have the chauffeur that we did not have a few years ago, and we have the employees in the moving picture theaters, and there are more manicurists and hairdressers, and so on, and they are opening new fields. But that is not very encouraging to the man who has spent four or five years in learning a trade and then four or five more in perfecting himself as a mechanic only to find himself thrown out.

So that the problem which the different races in this country who have become members of the skilled trades have to face is one which the white man, and the man whose ancestors were born here many years ago, also have to face.

I want to leave this one thought with you, because I have only endeavored to present to your minds some phases of a problem that I know, as a trade-union officer some thirty years. With perhaps a few exceptions in a few localities, the American trade-unionist is more eager to organize the negro than the negro is to become a member. I know that from my own personal contact with them. One of the difficulties which we have is due to that very condition which I referred to; which that great leader of the colored race encountered, that in order to have the negro receive the opportunity of learning a trade he had to be advised to keep away from the white trade-unionist, the problem which I present from a different angle, the results which affected that union of negro molders in Chattanooga, Tennessee, many years ago.

I find that the criticism which receive the widest publicity, coming from representatives of the colored race in this country, are making it more difficult for the American trade-union movement to organize the negro, just as it has been very difficult for us in some cities to organize the Pole, because the Polish boss who received most of his income from a political party, and the large industries in the city, advised the Poles to keep away from the union--"if you want to keep your good job, keep away from the union."

On the one hand we are accused of having no deals and of doing nothing toward organizing the negro, and on the other hand we are finding some representatives of that race doing everything they can to make it impossible for us to do any organizing.

Those of you who follow what is taking place will remember that about three or four years ago the National Convention of Negro Editors adopted a resolution advising negroes not to join trade unions for the reason that if they hoped to break into the industries and become mechanics, they must keep away from the unions, because if they did organize the employers would not give them the same opportunity to become competent mechanics.

I think there is a measure of justification in that position. The only criticism I would have is this: that those who realize that that is a necessary condition to the more rapid development of craft skill among the negroes, should not then publicly accuse the American Federation of Labor of not being willing to do the organizing.

I have asked representatives of the negro race, some of the best known, to make some public statement or write me a letter in which they would say it was their belief that wherever possible members of their race should join the trade union of their craft, so that I could use that statement or letter to help me in the efforts I have made to organize negroes. So far no such statement or letter has been received.

The problem as I see it is an economic one. It is not different materially from the problem which every other so-called race in this country is compelled to deal with.

I believe that all of the religious organizations, and the fraternal organizations, and the social organizations, and political organizations which any race may have, so far as they are a wage-earning group, are insufficient. Unless they have an economic organization through which by collective action they can compel consideration of their rights, they will never enjoy their rights because trade-union experience has led us to believe that valuable as religious liberty may be and political liberty, unless liberty and equality go along with them, it does help in the bread and butter part of it. It helps in the future world; but the trade-union movement is not interested in that; it will leave that to the religious teachers. It is interested in the problem of today, and in securing the largest amount of social justice that it possible to secure for everyone who is compelled to work for somebody else for wages.



I could have spoken to you tonight in a very pleasant way and told you of the many complimentary things which are justified in connection with what negro trade unions have done, but I have chosen rather to take the more unpleasant task, the responsibility, but I feel it is an equally important one, and that was to call direct attention to some of the problems with which I have been compelled to deal, and to suggest a way by which it would be possible for a larger number of the negro race to become members of the trade-union movement of this country.

Let me leave a pleasant thought with you in connection with the negro worker as a trade-unionist. This incident occurred in the South. It was one of my first experiences. I was in one of the most famous of Southern cities. The building trades were on strike. They had been on strike for some time and they were getting a little weary. Two trades decided that they had all of the wear and tear of strikes that they wanted, and reported back for work. Their action would have broken the strike. It happened that all of the hod carriers were negroes and all members of the Hod Carriers' Union. I will not give you the language they used when they decided what they were going to do. I will merely tell you that the negro union hod carriers refused to work for white union men who went back after their strike. As a result of the stand which the negro hod carriers took, eventually the white men won the strike.

*American Federationist*, 36 (March, 1929): 296-305.

17. THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND THE NEGRO

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*The Crisis*, 36(July, 1929): 241.

18. A LABOR CONVENTION

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*Chicago Defender*, January 11, 1930.

### 19. ORGANIZATION OF NEGRO LABOR

#### A Challenge to the A.F. of L.

By Elmer Anderson Carter

It was the textile industries of the South, for the most part manned by native born white Americans, which threw down the gauge of battle and precipitated the most widely heralded and aggressive attempt to organize southern workers in the history of the American Labor Movement. Southern capitalists, making a belated bid for industrial power, have always looked askance at any attempt to organize workers. And the new industrial South had its birth partly in the cheap docile labor supply which was used as bait to lure manufacturing plants from northern communities where the demands of organized labor were proving vexatious.

In the South organized labor has always been weak. Black labor as slave labor had impoverished and pauperized free white labor, and the traditional hostility between black and white workers which slavery fostered has not diminished except in rare instances. White workers in their allegiance to a caste superiority based on color and race have played into the hands of cheap political demagogues and of employers who have used the unspoken threat of black replacement to whip and to hold white workers in line. The capitalists of the South for the most part have been class conscious, but only partially race conscious in so far as workers are concerned, but the white workers of the South have been race conscious and only partially class conscious. As a result organized labor in the South has been timid and unaggressive, fearing black labor except in those occupations where a preponderance of black workers has made an alliance inevitable, or in those occupations where either tradition or a necessarily long apprenticeship served to keep black workers out.

#### Facing Conditions

These are the conditions which the American Federation of Labor faces in its great drive to unionize the South. They are conditions which "cannot be evaded, cannot be ignored, and must be faced." For any attempt to organize white workers without simultaneously organizing black workers must inevitably end in failure. If the American Federation of Labor is to succeed in the South, it must do so on the basis of an alliance between black and white workers. And this alliance cannot be achieved unless the American Federation of Labor is able to evolve a technique of labor cooperation which will assure to black workers the recognition and support of organized white labor.

Amid the giant furnaces and numerable smokestacks of Birmingham, Alabama, the American Federation of Labor has established its headquarters. From this center of the great industrial South, the strategists of the Labor Movement are even now directing their campaign. If they have eyes they will not need to go out of the state of Alabama in order to see the utter impossibility of organizing labor on the basis of racial superiority. For, according to the 1920 census, under the general heading, Extraction of Metals, of the 26,204 males over 10 years of age engaged in coal mining 14,097 were Negroes, over 53

per cent of the total number of coal mine operatives in the state. In the iron mines, out of a total of 6,102 operatives, 4,843 are Negroes, or 79 per cent of the total number engaged in iron mining. Under the manufacturing and mechanical industries in the same volume of the 1920 census, out of a total of 835 furnacemen and smeltermen, 666 are Negroes, almost 80 per cent. In the semi-skilled crafts in blast furnaces and steel rolling mills, including tin plate mills, out of a total of 2,307, 1,022 are Negroes, over 44 per cent. Among the 1,625 semi-skilled operatives in the saw and planing mills, including box factories, are 594 Negroes, or 36 per cent. In the suit, cloak and overall factories there are 444 Negroes out of a total of 508 semi-skilled operatives, over 87 per cent. And in the blast furnaces and steel rolling mills, out of a total of 10,680 unskilled laborers, 8,959 are Negroes, a little over 83 per cent. Taking the totals for the state in manufacturing and mechanical industry, out of 135,608 skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers 56,384 are Negroes, or 41 per cent.

Although these figures may vary more or less in the South as a whole, they are sufficient to indicate the numerical strength of black workers in that section of the country. They should be impressive enough to convince the American Federation of Labor that any plan for unionization of the South which attempts to ignore the black worker, or which attempts by subtle means to maintain a relationship based on caste, is foredoomed.

In the southern drive does the American Federation of Labor contemplate the organization of Negro workers? If so, what program has been outlined for that purpose? What methods are to be pursued in order to bring white workers and black workers to a common understanding of their common problems? How does the American Federation of Labor plan to bridge the gap which social custom and tradition have cut between the workers of the two races? These questions are pertinent--aye, are pressing for an answer. Speaking editorially in the January, 1930 issue of the AMERICAN FEDERATIONIST, Mr. William Green says: "Trade Union membership is open to all Negroes. The majority of trade unions accept Negroes as members, but when regulations are interposed the rules of the American Federation of Labor provide that Negro workers may apply for charters direct from the American Federation of Labor. . . . Through union organization the Negro can raise his standards and the American Federation stands ready to help."

#### A.F. of L. Complacency

If this is the answer which the American Federation of Labor makes to the questions above, and it is similar in content to other statements which from time to time have emanated from high officials of the Federation then the American Federation of Labor is not prepared to meet the challenge of black workers, not prepared in the South or in the nation. The attitude expressed in this statement is one of complacent satisfaction. It places the responsibility for the organization of Negroes on the Negro himself, while it ignores, apparently, the history of the Negro in the Labor Movement. That history is a history of resolutions which have been as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, of the creation of Federal and local unions which are dying from inanition, and of a constant struggle on the part of black workers not only to secure a place in industry but to hold that place sometimes against the hostility and aggressions of organized white labor.

If one will take the time to read the proceedings of the various conventions of the American Federation of Labor, he cannot help but be profoundly impressed by the constant and heroic effort which black workers through their accredited delegates have made to secure the support of organized labor from within. Ten years ago at the convention of the American Federation of Labor at Montreal, Quebec, Negro delegates, eager to extend the blessings of trade unionism among their fellows, and conscious of the hostile attitude which they, even as union men, encountered among their white brothers, presented the following resolution:

WHEREAS, The American Federation of Labor has taken a firm position on the claims of Negro labor to fair and impartial sharing of the benefits of organized labor; and

WHEREAS, Despite this attitude of the American Federation of Labor, encouraging results have not followed; and millions of Negro workingmen continue ignorant of the benefits of collective bargaining, thus militating against the successful operation of the Federation in its fight for a square deal for labor;

therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor enter upon a campaign of education among both white and colored working men to convince them of the necessity of bringing into the ranks of labor all men who work, regardless of race, creed or color; and be it further

RESOLVED, That, with this end in view, there be called into periodical conference with the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor white and colored leaders who can suitably represent and express the point of view of Negro workingmen, and can convey to Negro workingmen the good will and sympathy felt by the American Federation of Labor towards them; and be it further

RESOLVED, That there be employed in headquarters at Washington a competent Negro agent, taken from the ranks of labor, who will express the hopes and yearnings of Negro workingmen to the American Federation of Labor, and in turn be the mouthpiece of the Federation for such messages and information as the Federation may from time to time wish to convey to the Negro workers throughout the country; said agent to be the executive secretary and official representative in the interim of meetings of said special committee on Negro workers; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention endorse the appointment of Negro organizers in all states and for all crafts in which Negroes are or may be employed, whose duty will be to build up Negro membership.

#### Resolutions--That's All

This resolution was not a perfect one. But it pointed the way in that it sought to create the machinery which would bring both black and white workers to an understanding. The action of the Committee of Organization to which this resolution was referred, is indicative of the attitude which has pervaded the American Federation of Labor whenever it deals with the Negro. Here is the emasculated resolution which the committee reported and which was passed:

WHEREAS, The A.F. of L. has taken a firm position on the claims of Negro labor to fair and impartial sharing of the benefits of organized labor; and WHEREAS, Despite this attitude of the A.F. of L. encouraging results have not followed, and millions of Negro working men continue ignorant of the benefits of collective bargaining, thus militating against the successful operation of the Federation in its fight for a square deal for labor; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Negro organizers be appointed where necessary to organize Negro workers under the banner of the A.F. of L.

Your committee concurs in the resolution as amended and refers it to the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor to comply with, if the funds of the Federation will permit.

Evidently it was and is the conception of the A.F. of L. only to attempt to organize the Negro workers where necessary, and this is determined by the threat of Negro workers as potential strike breakers, or where Negro competition menaces the occupational security of white workers. It is a policy essentially weak, and as a result the growth of Negro adherents to the American Federation of Labor since 1920 has been steadily diminishing. And although it has been explained by Mr. Green that the decrease in Federal locals might be accounted for in part by the fact that some of them have become internationals, this will not account for the drop in Negro locals from 141 in November, 1921, to 21 in November 1929, since none of the Negro locals has become nationals or internationals, nor can they since it has been repeatedly stated by officers of the A.F. of L. that it is not the policy of the A.F. of L. to grant international charters along racial lines.

In 1929 Mr. A. Phillip Randolph, President of Sleeping Car Porters' Union No. 18,068 of New York City, presented another resolution which was passed by the A.F. of L. in convention assembled at Montreal as follows:

WHEREAS, There is wide-spread misunderstanding among Negro workers, who are some of the most severely exploited wage-earners in America, chiefly because of the lack of organization, as to the aims and policies of the American Federation of Labor; and

WHEREAS, The Negro workers in numerous industrial struggles, have been used by certain business interests as strike-breakers for the purpose of breaking down trade union standards of wages, hours and working conditions and the principle of collective bargaining;

THEREFORE, Be it resolved that the 49th Annual Convention of the A.F. of L. does herewith go on record as favoring the extension of an educational and organization program as outlined by President William Green in his recent speeches to the Sleeping Car Porters' in New York and Chicago, with a view to organizing them into the trades and callings as represented by the American Federation of Labor.

There has been no lack of resolutions on the part of the A.F. of L. as to the organization of Negro workers. If resolutions could have unionized Negro workers, there would not be a non-union black in the entire country. But the American Federation has never gotten really much further than the resolution stage and has been content "to resolve" and call it a day.

Whatever may be the plan of education and organization above mentioned, workers education in the aims of trade unionism to be effective must include both blacks and whites. No matter how thoroughly the doctrines and ideals of trade unionism are inculcated into the minds of Negroes, they will never be translated into organized effort so long as racial antipathy moves the black workers and racial snobbery permeates the whites.

In the past this education has not been wholly lacking. But it has been purchased at a price that is far too dear. Negroes struggling for existence and excluded from the ranks of organized labor have fought their way into industry in the role of strike breakers. They have been used by employers to beat down white labor. And then they in turn have been forced to accept wages and hours of work far below the minimum standards.

#### Negro Strikers

There is nothing in the Negroes' racial characteristics which predisposes them to be scabs. Negro union men have struck with white union men on more than one occasion. Black freight handlers on the Illinois Central Railroad loyally went on strike with the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks which denied them membership because of race. Negro hod carriers, according to John P. Frey, Secretary of the Metal Trades Department, American Federation of Labor, continued to hold out even after units of the building trades in a Southern city had decided to give up. Negro mine workers fought the introduction of Negro non-union mine workers in West Virginia as bitterly as white workers did. The history of the longshoreman is replete with instances where white men and black men in cities in the South walked out together and together achieved victory or accepted defeat.

Where stern necessity has driven black and white workers together, there it has been demonstrated that there can be cooperation, there can be a common basis of action, there can be understanding.

No one could expect the American Federation of Labor to destroy race prejudice in industry. It would be foolish to hope that a few magic words spoken from the convention platform would be sufficient to eradicate the accumulated social traditions of American life. But the American Federation of Labor is guilty of negligence and of lack of vision. For, knowing the conditions which ranged black workers and white ones against the other, it has done nothing to develop an entente cordiale. It offered escape to the black workers in the form of federal and local unions, and watched them slowly succumb to the very same forces which necessitated their existence. In an age when racial cooperation is the shibboleth of those who would solve the problems of race, it has disdained to try this simplest and least harmful method of racial understanding--an interracial industrial committee of black and white workers.

What, pray, has the Workers Education Bureau done to promote greater accord between black and white workers? What program does it recommend? What advice does it proffer to those who face the race problem in industry?<sup>77</sup>

Twelve years ago the National Urban League made a sustained effort to work out a plan of cooperation with the A.F. of L. for the organization of black workers. In 1925 and in 1926 it renewed its efforts but up to this time its offers have met with a chilly response. Negro leadership outside the ranks of organized labor has been no more successful in securing consideration for black workers than Negro leadership from within.

The 1920 census revealed that almost a million Negroes had entered industry. What the 1930 census will reveal no one knows. But increasing mechanization and rationalization certainly have sounded the death knell to many of the skilled crafts. The skilled job of yesterday may become the unskilled job of today, and tomorrow may utilize the services of two elements which have

remained on the fringe of the American Labor Movement because for the most part they make up that great horde of the unskilled--Negroes and women. A rigidly restricted immigration, plus the increasing simplification of tasks may easily increase the number of Negroes in industry to formidable proportions.

The Negro worker, then, in America is the challenge of Industrial Democracy. And the question still remains. Will the A.F. of L. meet that challenge?

*Labor Age*, 19 (February, 1930): 9-11, 29.

20. THE A.F. OF L.

Content removed at rightsholder's request.

*The Crisis*, 40 (December, 1933): 292.

## 21. INDUSTRIAL UNIONS AND THE NEGRO WORKER

Content removed at rightsholder's request.

*The Crisis*, 43 (September, 1936): 273.

## WILLIAM GREEN AND BLACK WORKERS

## 22. ORGANIZING THE NEGRO WORKERS

We have been informed by Mr. William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, that in the forthcoming nation-wide campaign to organize the workers that no distinction will be made with respect to race. Of course we have been told this before. Still Negro workers are unorganized and condemned for breaking strikes. Nothing systematic has been done to organize them, except among the needle trades unions, and even they, though liberal, have done too little. None of the unions seem to be inclined to employ Negro organizers to help carry the message of Unionism to Negro labor. The commonest common sense ought to dictate to the white labor leaders that there will be no effective work done in organizing Negro labor except with the aid of intelligent Negro labor organizers.

*The Messenger*, 7(June, 1925): 228.

## 23. OUR NEGRO WORKER

By William Green

*President, American Federation of Labor*

As human progress moves upward men are increasingly concerned with the



problems of living together. The first step is to find those things in which there is community of interest. As we develop the art of living together and develop those things that constitute civilization, wide chasms between groups and nations tend to disappear. But there must be balanced development in all groups. So the wage earners of all industries and all races have mutual interests and common problems. It is of fundamental importance that the approach to these problems be intelligent, not emotional; with tolerance of understanding and patience and not prejudice and antagonism.

There are within the United States wage earners of many nationalities and races. The ideals for which our republic stands require that all these wage earners shall be accorded equal opportunities for self-development and progress. On the economic side, the standards established by the foremost ranks cannot progress further than they can resist the downward pull of the backward ranks.

The backward ranks have been recent immigrants and those racial groups within our country whose standards are below ours. The American Negroes have been in this class. The Negro wage earners of the United States have made great strides under tremendous handicaps. For historical causes over which Negroes themselves had no control, Negroes were living in the land of a race with which they were not equipped to compete. Despite a generally unfavorable public opinion, Negro workers have proven their ability to make a contribution to the world's work and to achieve positions of responsibility and service.

As Negro workers have increasingly found their way into the industrial world, they have come more or less directly into competition with white wage earners. That competition worked against the best interests of both groups. It vanishes only when the Negro workers raised their standards of life and work, and this can be done only through organization directly or indirectly. Many Negro workers have assumed the responsibility of industrial workers and have joined the union of their trade.

The forces of industry operate impersonally--irrespective of race, religion or prejudice of any nature. If those forces are to be controlled and directed to conserve the best interests of those employed in production, there must be cooperation and joint counsel irrespective of any consideration but the welfare of the group determined on a functional basis.

There is need for broad understanding of the mutuality of the welfare of all concerned with production. That there has been prejudice on the part of white workers against Negroes, we cannot deny, but the way to overcome this lies through clearer understanding and honestly facing the principles of human betterment. Nothing permanent is gained by seeking an unfair advantage or exploitation.

The principle of mutuality is essential to all cooperative undertakings. Mutuality postulates groups and intergroup cooperation. The group must study its own problem and organize for constructive action. The procedure differs but little whatever the group or the purpose. The dependency for all real progress is education. Development must come from within. Outside agencies may help, but the only road to self-government and self-discipline is education. By this I mean something more than the formal agencies for study and information, important as they are. I mean that attitude toward the experiences of life that seeks truth without being confused either by personal feeling or prejudice on the part of others, and which reasons from facts and principles to logical conclusions in making decisions in every day life. Such an attitude makes every experience a step in the education of the individual. It is an attitude that brings growing possibilities for richness of life and broadness of vision as the years are added.

It is my most earnest hope that Negro wage earners will not allow themselves to be lured from principles and practices that make for substantial and practical progress. With you as well as with all mankind your hope for progress lies in education. Guard well your opportunities for education and self-discipline and see that your children avail themselves of opportunities. Guard your educational agencies against propaganda or special interests that would prevent them from the service of truth. Freedom of learning is the heart of all real freedom--for if the mind is in bondage then are we hopelessly lost.

The A.F. of L. stands ready to give you the protection of an organized movement. Many of you have already joined, but many more are still on the outside. Our organization has demonstrated its practical value. The struggle is not easy, but you owe to your selves and to us to join in the movement for the advancement of common interests.

## 24. NEGRO WAGE EARNERS

By William Green

There is something inexpressibly reprehensible in taking an unfair advantage of an individual or a group that has not an equal sporting chance. The efforts of the communists to mislead the negroes is a case in point. A negro who is a communist and is personally in touch with the international communist group is working upon prejudice, credulity and discontent to mobilize negro opinion and sympathy in support of revolutionary practices and programs.

Such an effort deserves the indignation it has received. It is bad enough to mislead those who have an equal opportunity to know, but to take advantage of the weaknesses of those who have a moral right to our special care is quite outside the pale of decency and ethics. Misrepresentation and deception has been used to promote the World Negro Congress to be held in Chicago in October.

Warning has been issued to organized labor and to negroes specifically not to allow themselves to be lured from principles and practices that make for substantial progress. The hope for progress for the negro as for all citizens lies in education. Education gives the understanding necessary for control over the facts and forces of life. It brings individual development that makes possible finer and more practical reciprocal cooperation. The negro race can make a rich contribution to our cultural as well as our economic development. Education is the only road to the making of that contribution and to rising to higher levels where it will be possible to overcome artificial barriers now constricting negro life.

Supplementing education is the practical agency, organization. Organization makes possible an ordered development and a control over the economic forces.

The A.F. of L. offers to negro wage earners the protection and the experience of the trade union movement. It is necessary for negro workers to assure their responsibility for the advancement and maintenance of American standards of life and work. An equal obligation rests upon trade unionists to hold out a helping hand. No group can permanently escape the principle of mutuality which underlies all human progress.

*American Federationist*, 32 (October, 1925): 878-79.

## 25. AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR CONVENTION

This was our first visit to a convention of the Federation. It had some highlights of interest as well as many dead levels. This, of course, in a measure is the tenor of most conventions.

I was disappointed, however, with the absence of any hot intellectual battles on the floor. Everything seems to have been ironed out in committees. Groups seemed to be even afraid to support their own resolutions. We learned, however, from a discerning observer that this is a recognized form of strategy of groups that back resolutions. Regardless of its strategical value, it doesn't make for a healthy moral and intellectual condition of the labor movement. It seems to savor of the fact that groups are losing time and energy in deft and subtle manipulations and parryings, without the courage to face an issue and fight it through. While many delegates apparently favored the idea of sending a delegation to study conditions in Soviet Russia, only Max Hayes of the Typographical Union of Cleveland, seemed to be willing publicly to admit it.

The most thoughtful talks were made by President Green, John P. Frey, Matthew Woll, Andrew Furuseth and John P. Lynch. Green is very deliberate and clear in his observations. He sometimes retraces a sentence in order to be sure of his thought. He has much of the manner of a theolog. He is markedly dignified. He seems to be yet feeling his way as the leader of the Federation.

...

Three Negro delegates of the Freight Handlers were present. They had all of the subtle quietness and diplomacy born of a victim of long oppression. They had problems, labor, organizational and racial which they wanted to work out, but they seemed securely isolated. They were not professional labor leaders although they were not unaware of what it was all about; but they were wholly unprepared to cope with so practical a group of labor leaders who shaped affairs. They, however, were quite the equal of the average white delegate. Immediately we saw them, they showed a welcome glow in their eyes, and manifested great concern about our welfare.

I felt that the Negro workers needed a strong man whose voice would be heard and respected in that parliament of American labor. There was not a word on their problems, although the American labor movement cannot reach its goal without them. American labor needs the refreshing, spiritual idealism of black American workers who have not been saturated with the practicalism of winning technical victories. President Green seems to understand that.

*The Messenger*, 8 (November, 1926): 336.

## 26. NATIONAL UNIONS ADMIT RACE WORKERS

WASHINGTON, D.C.--The American Federation of Labor stands ready to give to the Negro workers the protection of an organized movement and the Negro workers owe it to themselves and organized labor to join in the movement for the advancement of common interests.

That is the declaration of William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, in a statement to the Negro press last Wednesday. It was in answer to the question of the attitude of the American Federation of Labor toward Negro workers. The question was asked him because of his pledge of full support to the efforts to organize Pullman car porters and maids, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters having become an affiliated organization of the American Federation of Labor.

### Full Text

The full text of the statement of Mr. Green is as follows:

"There are within the United States wage earners of many nationalities and races. The ideals for which our republic stands require that all these wage earners shall be accorded equal opportunities for self-development and progress. Keenly conscious of these self-evident facts, the American Federation of Labor in convention assembled in 1890 declared that the--

"A.F. of L. looks with disfavor upon trade unions having provisions in their constitutions excluding from membership persons on account of race and color and requests they be expunged."

In 1893

"Again in 1893 the convention proclaimed:

"Resolved, that we here and now reaffirm as one of the cardinal principles of the labor movement that the working people must unite and organize, irrespective of creed, color, sex, nationality and politics.

"The standards established by the foremost ranks of workers cannot progress further than they can resist the downward pull of the backward ranks. The backward ranks have been recent immigrants and those racial groups within our country whose standards are below ours. The American Negroes have been in this class."

### Wage Earners

"The Negro wage earners of the United States have made great strides under tremendous handicaps. For historical causes over which Negroes themselves had no control. Negroes were living in the land of a race with which they were not equipped to compete. Yet Negro workers have proven their ability to make a contribution to the world's work and to achieve positions of

responsibility and service.

#### Raise Standards

"As Negro workers have increasingly found their way into the industrial field, they have come more or less directly into competition with white wage earners. That competition works against the best interests of both groups. It vanishes only when the Negro workers raise their standards of life and work. This can be done only through organization, directly or indirectly.

"The Pioneers of the organized labor movement were very conscious of this when they drafted into the constitution of the American Federation of Labor the following provision:

#### Separate Charters

"Separate charters may be issued to Central Labor Unions, Local Unions, or Federal Labor Unions, composed exclusively of colored members, where in the judgment of the Executive Council, it appears advisable and to the best interests of the Trade Union Movement to do so.

"In the obligation given to wage earners who join local unions holding charters of affiliation from the American Federation of Labor they are required to declare 'never to discriminate against a fellow worker on account of creed, color or nationality.'

#### 105 Unions

"There are 105 national and international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor representing the principal trades and callings in the industrial field. At least 100 of these unions admit colored workers to membership. Where this is not done the American Federation of Labor issues certificates of affiliation direct.

#### 22 Colored Unions

"Many Negro workers have assumed the responsibility of industrial workers and have joined the unions of their trades. However, as the national and international unions are organized upon the basis of competency of the workman to meet the requirements of trade union obligations and not the nationality of the applicant, it would be difficult to ascertain the exact number of colored workers now holding membership in the national and international unions of their trades and callings.

"There are now chartered direct by the American Federation of Labor twenty-two local unions of colored workers and five central labor unions whose component local unions have a membership entirely colored.

#### Impersonal

"The forces of industry operate impersonally--irrespective of race, religion or prejudice of any nature. If those forces are to be controlled and directed to conserve the best interests of those employed in production, there must be cooperation and joint counsel irrespective of any consideration but the welfare of the group determined on a functional basis.

#### Education

"It is my most earnest hope that Negro wage earners will not allow themselves to be lured from principles and practices that make for substantial and practical progress. With them as well as with all mankind their hope for progress lies in education. They should guard well their opportunities for education and self-discipline and see that their children avail themselves of opportunities. They should guard their educational agencies against propaganda of special interests. Freedom of learning is the heart of all real freedom, for if the mind is in bondage then are we hopelessly lost.

#### Many Outside

"The American Federation of Labor stands ready to give to the Negro workers

the protection of an organized movement. Many have already joined, but many more are still on the outside. Our organization has demonstrated its practical value. The struggle is not easy but the Negro workers owe it to themselves and to us to join in the movement for the advancement of common interests."

*Baltimore Afro-American*, July 13, 1929.

## 27. THE A.F. OF L. AND THE NEGRO

By Elmer Anderson Carter

It is often asserted that black workers have been slow in accepting the doctrines and methods of organized labor. The most exploited workers in the United States, they have remained the least organized and therefore the most feeble in achieving either security and their employment or living wages and decent working conditions. This apparent indifference of the black worker to the benefits of trade unionism has served to draw the fire of various officials of the American Federation of Labor who, when accused of apathy to the fate of Negro labor, have replied from time to time that the Negro worker was unorganizable, and was as yet incapable of appreciating the necessity of identifying himself with the American Labor Movement.

The recent convention of the American Federation of Labor in Toronto lacked much of being able to convince observers that it is the pillar of flame by night and a cloud by day to lead the black worker, or for that matter the white worker, out of the wilderness. Out of the thirty million workers in America less than three million are enrolled in the American Federation. And the number of accessions this year of our Lord, which was to see a great deal in the South, even as reported, was a scanty 35,000.

The American Federation of Labor then not only has failed to unionize the black worker; it has failed to unionize the white worker. It is the citadel not of labor in the large sense but of crafts, and as a craft organization it necessarily has failed to embrace that great mass of unskilled labor with which the bulk of the black workers is identified.

Only in those occupations, generally semi-skilled or unskilled, which attract large numbers of Negroes, such as longshoremen, hod-carriers, common building laborers, or those in which Negroes enjoy a comparative monopoly, such as dining-car waiters and Pullman porters; or those in which Negro competition is able to cope successfully with the competition of white workers, as in the coal mining industry, only in these has American organized labor made any real effort to enlist the black worker in its ranks. The Negro, contrary to general opinion, is not slow to organize. There are approximately 100,000 Negro workers who are affiliated with some form of labor organization, a remarkable number when one considers that the Negro not only is outside of the pale of the skilled craft organizations, but also is compelled oft times to face the opposition of white labor, organized and unorganized, in order to gain a foothold in industry.

It is true that the American Federation of Labor has issued several lofty pronouncements to the effect that no discrimination because of race or color should govern admission to unions. It is also true that only eleven unions affiliated with the Federation specifically deny Negroes membership. But, so far, even when racial prejudice does not operate effectively to keep Negroes out, craft limitations and restrictions achieve the same result.

The statesmanship of the American Federation of Labor has failed to meet the problem of the unskilled worker, therefore it has been inadequate insofar as black workers are concerned. And there will be but little hope for the black worker in the American Federation as long as it is the so-called "aristocracy of labor," as long as it remains structurally a craft organization. And there will not be much hope for the unskilled white worker either in those great industries where crafts give way before the introduction of machinery and the increasing specialization of tasks. Where this has occurred to a considerable degree, the American Federation of Labor has made but little progress; the automobile industry; the packing industry; the rising rayon

industries, these three are significant and striking examples of the failure of the Federation to keep pace with modern industrial trends.

In the South, where the Federation contemplates a mighty effort to organize the worker, a higher type of statesmanship will have to be evolved than has hitherto been revealed by the guiding geniuses of the Federation. Any attempt to organize the workers which ignores the presence of the two million black workers will be fraught with disaster. It will take more than official pronouncements of policy. It will demand the resolute facing of the fact that the problems of white labor and the problems of black labor are identical.

*Opportunity*, 7 (November, 1929): 335-36.

28. WILLIAM GREEN (A.F.L.) TO ELMER ANDERSON CARTER,  
EDITOR OF "OPPORTUNITY," NOVEMBER 7, 1929

Washington, D.C.  
November 7, 1929

My dear Mr. Carter:

Because I realized how constructive has been the work of the Urban League and how carefully it has tried to present facts in order that wrong ideas might not mislead the Negroes, I would like to call your attention to the misleading character of the editorial published in the November issue of "Opportunity" entitled "The A.F. of L. and the Negro." Because Negroes have been so much exploited is an additional reason for making sure that they have the facts in all cases.

The pronouncements of any organization may be accepted as the ideal toward which the organization is headed. In no organization do we find that all members live fully at all times to its ideals but nevertheless as human beings we approximate as nearly as we can under the circumstances the ideals which inspire us. Constructive progress is usually slow but definitely pointed toward the ideal. To say that the American Federation of Labor has not yet unionized all workers whether white or black is not necessarily failure but a statement that the one undertaking is not yet accomplished. You do not say that a church has failed because a cathedral is not built in a year or because all are not church members leading perfect lives. Joining a trade union represents a very similar change in the worker's life to joining a religious group. Joining a trade union requires something more than merely telling the worker that the union is there and that it can render him a service. There must be on the part of the worker willingness to join and understanding of the permanence of that membership as well as the new relationship between the union and the employer brought about by collective bargaining. Willingness to join the union represents a new attitude toward work problems on the part of the worker and an appreciation of his own function and contribution to the work process. These are not purposes that can be accomplished in all industries in a year or a decade. But, on the other hand, sometimes the change comes unexpectedly and suddenly as it did among the southern textile workers this past spring. There in a number of localities union activity is moving steadily forward and textile workers are being educated in union activity.

The Federation cannot effectively carry the gospel of unionism until workers are ready to hear and act. Any agency that has influence in formulating opinion among Negroes is assuming a very grave responsibility when it prejudices a group of workers against the work of the American Federation of Labor. We have not accomplished all that we would have liked but our work is carried on by workers for workers and it cannot move more rapidly than the workers themselves.

The editorial in "Opportunity" condemns the basis upon which our unions have been formed. Had the writer of the editorial been familiar with the history of the development of unions, he would have undoubtedly reached a different opinion. Each group of workers forming a national or international organization has determined for itself the basis of its organization. Some

have found the craft basis more effective--others use the industrial basis. Under the regulations which have been developed through the American Federation of Labor no pronouncement has been made in favor of either type. We have, however, definitely and continuously refused to advocate one form to the exclusion of the other. The reason for this is obvious. You will remember sometime ago workers in the printing industry were organized in one union. Finding that this was not an effective method they split up into craft unions. The same thing is true of the workers in the paper industry. Formally all were in one union. The pulp and sulphite workers believed that they could make greater progress in a separate union and acted accordingly. On the other hand, in the mining industry it is more practical to have a single union for all. The railway shop employees while maintaining their craft organizations act collectively through a System Federation.

Even though a union organization may refuse to accept Negro members, it is possible for the Negro workers to organize and secure a charter of direct affiliation with the American Federation of Labor.

A magazine devoted to educational purposes and particularly one that has a responsibility for helping to form the opinion of an underprivileged group has a very serious duty to perform in first securing all of the facts before advising its readers. As the editorial in "Opportunity" states, a conference will be called to plan for more intensive work in the South. As there are many Negro workers in the South it would have been a mutually good service had your editorial suggested that the Negro workers prepare to take advantage of this drive and cooperate in the undertaking.

A very impressive event in the Toronto Convention was the address of A. Phillip Randolph which was listened to with marked attention by all delegates. Even though it occurred in the closing hours when business was transacted with that rapidity which marks the end of convention business there was evident appreciation of the great work which Mr. Randolph is doing for the Pullman porters. I am sorry the editorial failed to advise the readers of "Opportunity" of this part of the convention business which I think would have been of special interest to the group.

I hope very much that you may get better acquainted with the work of the American Federation of Labor for I am sure that the facts will lead you to a different editorial policy.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) WM. GREEN  
President, American Federation of Labor.

*Opportunity*, 7 (December, 1929): 381-82.

## 29. NATIONAL NEGRO LABOR CONFERENCE

By William Green

In January there will be held in Chicago a National Negro Labor Conference sponsored by the Sleeping Car Porters Unions. This organization of negro workers has recognized that the fundamental problem of negroes, as of all other workers, is industrial, and that the first attack on this problem is organization in trade unions.

Organization is the way to status in industry higher wages, just and honest working conditions, shorter hours of work. These things are essential to higher social and political standing.

Trade-union membership is open to all negroes. The majority of trade unions accept negroes as members, but when regulations are interposed the rules of the American Federation of Labor provide that negro workers may apply for charters direct from the American Federation of Labor.

The second step in meeting the needs of negro workers is vocational training. Workers who have no craft or special training must join the ranks of unskilled workers. Unskilled workers have lower rates and less continuity of

employment. They are the first workers dropped when business slows down. Unions are the agencies through which workers can assure proper vocational courses through public schools.

The leadership of the Sleeping Car Porters is guaranteed that the National Negro Labor Conference to be held in Chicago in January will consider negro problems from this practical and constructive approach. All phases of the lives of negro workers are to be discussed and many of the speakers will be negroes who have achieved distinction in their work.

This conference is an opportunity to promote better understanding between all who work and that cooperation will serve the best interests of all. No group or race can win permanent advantage by taking unfair advantage by exploitation or undercutting standards. Through union organization the negro can raise his standards, and the American Federation of Labor stands ready to help.

*American Federationist*, 37 (January, 1930): 21-22.

### 30. LABOR AND THE NEGRO

In an editorial appearing in the January number of *The Federationist*, official organ of the American Federation of Labor, William Green, its president, comes out frankly and definitely for the organization of Negro workers and helping them to orient themselves to the new age of mass machine production. Says he:

"Organization is the way to status in industry. Higher wages, just and honest working conditions, shorter hours of work--these things are essential to higher social and political standing." All of which is nothing but the truth.

It is encouraging to see the American Federation of Labor taking such unusual interest in the black worker. True, close to a hundred thousand Negro laborers belong to the A.F. of L., but never before has it offered to aid the entire group of black workers. While it is generally conceded by students of the labor movement in this country that craft unionism as represented by the American Federation of Labor is losing numbers and influence rapidly, Negro labor is not in a position to spurn the hand of fellowship and solidarity. Any organization is better than no organization, because the individual attempting to bargain with his laboring power and skill can get little or no recognition unless a member of some organization.

The new attitude of the American Federation of Labor toward the Negro is indicative of the general change of front taking place in this country on the Negro question. No one need imagine that Utopia is right around the corner, but there is good reason to believe that it is not so far away as it once was.

*Pittsburgh Courier*, January 11, 1930.

### 31. OPEN LETTER TO MR. WILLIAM GREEN, PRESIDENT AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

Dear Sir:

Your reply to the editorial "The A.F. of L. and the Negro," which appeared in the November issue *OPPORTUNITY Magazine*, and your editorial entitled, "National Negro Labor Conference" in the current issue of the *American Federationist* lead me to commend you in the name of the National Urban League for your official expression of interest in a cause which has long been neglected. That the Federation "stands ready to help" the Negro "raise his standards" is a commitment the Urban League wants to see fulfilled.

We are afraid, however, judging from past observations and experiences, that the word "stands" is to be taken literally; for we have seen the Federation stand still, exerting not a single muscle to welcome Negroes into the folds of organized labor, while blaming them for not accepting the restrictions grudgingly offered. In standing ready to help is it to be understood that you will now work



for the removal of constitutional and ritualistic clauses governing the conduct of labor bodies that limit membership to white workers?

We are willing to accept your implied good faith, but please permit us to point out that this is not the first time we have read similar declarations. We do not question the "ideals toward which the organization is headed," but we cannot admire the practice followed in the pursuit of those ideals.

For forty years Negro workers have heard the public pronouncements of the American Federation of Labor in favor of absolute equality for all workers regardless of race, color or creed. We have seen resolutions adopted by your body in convention assembled. While we know that the American Federation of Labor has no power to force any national or international union to accept its mandates, we have seen such mandates as pertained to Negro workers deliberately flouted by national and international unions, and these bodies go uncensured. We saw no change in the status of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks because it refused to change its constitution so as to admit Negro workers, but we did see the organization summarily dismissed because of a jurisdictional dispute with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. We have seen national bodies admitted to the Federation within the last ten years that have encouched in their laws circumscriptions of Negro workers.

All the while Negro workers have been branded as scabs. They were wanted in the union only after they had entered industry as strikebreakers. Denied opportunity to work under normal conditions they have been conscious of opposition from white workers and have resorted to strike-breaking as much to retaliate as to find employment. And even when they have joined unions they have been refused work because fellow white unionists would not work with them. Thus, whites arrayed against blacks and blacks against whites have kept up a constant warfare to the detriment of labor and the advantage of capital.

When has the American Federation of Labor campaigned among its white members for its ideal of fair play reiterated in frequent resolutions? It has permitted the labor union movement to become infested with narrowness and bigotry while blaming Negroes for not joining its ranks.

It is no defense to point out that only a few national organizations bar Negroes from membership. Subterfuges of one kind or another restrict as effectively as law. Nor does the federal local solve the problem. This expedient has offered an escape but not a solution; for it provides the badge but not the protection of unionism. Federal locals have no independence. Its members have no self-determination, for they are bound by the regulations of the Executive Council of the A.F. of L. who as officers of various national units condone the discriminations which have made federal locals expedient. As inoffensive as these federal locals are they are as a rule organized only when Negroes themselves take the initiative. If your new promise to help contemplates the initiative by the Federation will you organize federal locals of Negro plumbers, of machinists, railway mail clerks and others similarly excluded?

In ten years (1919 to 1928) the number of Negro locals and federal locals dropped from 169 to 23 in active standing on January 1, 1929. This is not because Negroes do not make good union members. There are too many instances that prove their loyalty under most trying circumstances for such an assertion to be true. I have heard veteran laborites tell of the exploits of Negro unionists that saved the day for unionism. No, the answer is that Negroes have never felt themselves welcome. They have seldom had full union privileges and protection. They have been taken in only when they managed to get past the barrages set against them. They have been asked to sell unionism to themselves, with a poor argument for their doing so. Only occasionally Negro organizers have been employed with varying degrees of success.

The Federation is about to embark on a campaign in the South where Negro wage-earners prevail in large numbers. They will want assurance that you will make their lot no harder than it now is. On the other hand the labor movement wants strength and solidarity. Negroes will want the union and the union will want them. You say in your article "At the Crossroads" in the current issue of the *Federationist* "No Southern community wants a large proportion of its population to remain permanently in the poverty group which entails high expenditures for relief; high percentage of uncollectible bills held by real estate owners, merchants, doctors, etc.; poorer stores in the community; a citizenry less competent to maintain good government; unnecessary sickness and the great susceptibility to epidemics." Negroes form "a large proportion of the population of many southern communities," where as you state "the average

annual income is lowest." May we ask then, whether or not your plans for organizing in the South, call for organizing Negroes--not merely permitting them to join--but actively campaigning for their membership.

In 1918 the National Urban League presented to your predecessor, Mr. Gompers, a resolution signed by leading white and colored citizens who asked that the Federation take active steps to bring Negro workers within the folds of the movement. This request was renewed in 1920, but the proposition was acknowledged with a resolution and tabled.

When the Industrial Relations Department of the National Urban League was organized in 1925, immediately it undertook to establish friendly relations with your office. Once in that year and again the following year the writer appeared before the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor in an effort to remove the laxity of the Federation toward Negro workers. We offered to raise one-half of the salary of a competent Negro who would work under your direction in trying to smooth out the relationship between colored workers and the various component national and international organizations, but you informed us that the "Executive Council does not at this time feel that the American Federation of Labor can undertake to meet the expense which would be involved in carrying out your proposition."

As to our own position on this question, a convention of the National Urban League, assembled in Detroit in 1919, went on record by resolution as favoring unionization of Negro workers. Various locals of the League have adopted resolutions or have aided units of the Federation in one way or another. A trade union committee of white and colored people, which won favor from prominent Federation officials, had its genesis in an Urban League office. We have supported the cause of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, we have contributed articles to the *Federationist* and you have contributed an article to our magazine *OPPORTUNITY*. We have invited you to speak before our National convention on more than one occasion.

We write you in this fashion not because we are antagonistic but because we want to see something done. The Urban League is trying to lift the status and standards of Negro workers, but how can it do this as long as workers of the two racial groups wrangle for advantage? It is the job of us both to promote peace in industry but until we have the masses of workers realize the oneness of aim of all workingmen, regardless of race, color or creed, we shall have strife and not peace. There can be no peace in the hearts of white workers if black workers take their jobs when they are on strike; and there can be no peace in the hearts of black workers when they are denied not only the privilege to organize but also the right to labor because white workers object. When we have settled our labor differences between the races we shall have added materially to the spirit of interracial goodwill that is moving forward in other circles. In this common undertaking the Urban League, recognized as the foremost agency in the industrial field among Negroes, and the American Federation of Labor, spokesman of the American Labor movement, must each carry its part of the burden.

Respectfully yours,

T. ARNOLD HILL, Director,  
Department of Industrial Relations,  
National Urban League.

*Opportunity*, 8 (February, 1930): 56-57.

## 32. NEGRO WAGE EARNERS AND TRADE UNIONS

By William Green

During the past five years Negro wage earners have been turning to the organized labor movement with new conviction. They are becoming responsible union members, sharing the benefits and hardships of union endeavor. With increasing frequency they have appeared in Washington as representatives of

wage earners for the business of code making. These developments are evidence of substantial progress in the growing acceptance of responsibility on the part of Negro workers.

The American Federation of Labor sees in this development the beginning of a new era for wage-earners. Membership in a trade union represents a desire to keep step with economic and social progress and acceptance of the responsibilities for working out progress for wage-earners. This constructive attitude means that both white and Negro workers will join ranks in determining and maintaining minimum and maximum standards. When any one group however small accepts sub-standard conditions, the wage structure for all is undermined. Although the labor movement has had every sympathy for the handicaps of Negro workers, willingness on the part of some to undercut standards of compensation and workmanship, have been the source of practical difficulties. While we appreciated the reasons for the situation, it is with frank gladness and relief we note the progress of these workers beyond the necessities which prevented them from working common cause with us.

There is an immediate problem in many industries with which the advanced groups may cope--the Southern differential which in so many cases means the determination of the industry to depress Negro wages. Opportunity for Negro wage earners lies not in undercutting wages for white workers but in cooperating for the elimination of such a differential.

Negro workers need high wages so that they may increase their reserves. In periods like the past five years, the reserves of many have been exhausted. The unemployment relief census taken by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in October 1933, showed that 18 per cent of the Negroes of the country were on relief as contrasted with 9.5 per cent of whites. In order to build up reserves for the emergencies of life, Negroes must have higher pay for their work and set aside a fixed amount for savings and emergency purposes. You want just as good homes and as good opportunities for your children as any other citizens of this country. The way to do it is organization for the purpose of negotiating a work contract with your employer that will provide higher wages and better work conditions. Your union executive will be responsible for negotiation of the work contract and for seeing that it is enforced. You pay dues into your union to pay your union executives and the expenses of the organization. If your dues are high enough the union may set up union benefits. During the year of 1933, the unions of this country paid out over 40 millions of dollars for death, sickness, unemployment, old age, disability, and other benefits. All of this was in addition to assuring members the highest wages paid in industries and securing the five-day week for the majority.

All those Negro wage earners who want to undertake seriously the job of increasing their incomes and assuring themselves of definite work rights, should join the union of their fellow workers or apply to the American Federation of Labor for a charter.

You can better yourselves if you are ready to make the effort. It will require courage and endurance, but what others have done you can do. I know many Negro miners who are splendid union workers, who can always be counted on for most faithful union responsibilities.

The union is the first step.

*Opportunity*, 12 (October, 1934): 299.

33. AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. WILLIAM GREEN  
OF THE A.F. OF L.

October 16, 1934

Mr. William Green,  
American Federation of Labor Building  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I note that in "Opportunity" for October, 1934, you "venture some advice

to Negro workers," as the Editor so aptly puts it. You say "Opportunity for Negro wage earners lies not in under-cutting wages for white workers, but in cooperating for the elimination of such a differential."

As an interested white observer, and as a member of the St. Louis Conference on Race Relations, I am writing this open letter to indicate to you and to readers of "Opportunity" how amusing your article is. Although numerous charters of A.F. of L. locals are careful to disavow any differentiation against colored people, there are many, many instances in which Negroes are denied the privilege of "sharing the benefits and hardships of union endeavor." The building trades unions are perhaps the most notorious in this regard.

Surely you are aware of the inability of highly qualified Negro carpenters, masons, etc., to get jobs on the New Homer Phillips Hospital for colored, now being erected in St. Louis. Here is one of the most glaring instances of race-discrimination on the part of both municipal and union authorities.

You are entirely correct in saying, "When any one group however small accepts substandard conditions, the wage structure for all is undermined." And yet, how largely your A.F. of L. is responsible for forcing the Negroes to "accept substandard conditions," by *keeping them out* of the unions of more highly-skilled workers! Your policy of "unofficial exclusion" of so many well-trained, fully qualified Negro workers is harmful to Negroes and to the A.F. of L. alike. No wonder 18 per cent of the Negroes of the country were on relief in 1933--in contrast to 9.5 per cent of the whites!

"Brutus, thou sleepest! Awake!"

P.J. WHITE, Jr.

St. Louis

For the St. Louis Conference on Race Relations

*Opportunity*, 12 (November, 1934): 350.

#### SELECTED A.F. OF L. CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ON NEGRO LABOR

##### 34. 1920 CONVENTION

Resolution No. 5--By Delegate Robert E. Burford, of the Freight Handlers, Station and Express Employes' Union No. 16220, Richmond, Va.:

WHEREAS, The B. of R. C., having jurisdiction of all Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employes; and

WHEREAS, The constitution of the B. of R. C. says only white people are eligible to membership; and

WHEREAS, There are about one hundred thousand (100,000) colored employes that come under their jurisdiction and are barred from membership in the B. of R. C., on account of color; and

WHEREAS, The B. of R. C. is affiliated with the A.F. of L.; and

WHEREAS, The constitution of the A.F. of L. does not bar any worker on account of color or race; and

WHEREAS, The Grand President, Mr. J. J. Forrester, of the B. of R. C.,<sup>79</sup> stated to the 39th annual convention of the A.F. of L., in Atlantic City, that he would not relinquish jurisdiction over these employes, and that he would arrange everything satisfactory with these employes at his next executive meeting; and

WHEREAS, This meeting was called in Washington, D.C., in July, 1919, and our committee attended that meeting and stated their case before that board, and Mr. Gompers and Mr. Morrison addressed the board in our favor; and

WHEREAS, The board gave every assurance that this matter would be speedily adjusted, and we would hear from them as soon as it could satisfactorily be adjusted; and

WHEREAS, The Executive Board of the B. of R. C. met in Cincinnati last February or March and discussed this question, and not having any of our committee present, they tabled the matter for further investigation of the so-called "Negro Problem" as handled by the older organization; and

WHEREAS, We are not trying for, nor do we want what is called "social equality," as some are trying to insinuate; and

WHEREAS, We only want equal protection and representation in all of the matters that concern us; and

WHEREAS, We are not looking for charity, nor do we want anybody to bear our burdens, but we are willing and ready to bear our part; and

WHEREAS, Our loyalty cannot be questioned, and as we believe that the fate of our organization is in the balance; and, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 40th convention assembled will use every means in its power to have the words "only white" members stricken out of the constitution of the B. of R. C., and admit the colored workers to full membership in their Brotherhood, or have them relinquish jurisdiction over the Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees and allow them to establish a Brotherhood of their own.

Your committee non-concurs in this resolution for the reason that the American Federation of Labor cannot interfere with the trade autonomy of affiliated national and international unions. By the action of the last convention of the American Federation of Labor, held in Atlantic City, N.J., in 1919, the American Federation of Labor was authorized to organize colored workers under charters from the A.F. of L. if affiliated national and international unions refused to accept them.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the recommendation of the committee.

Delegate Hay, Brotherhood Railway Clerks: I participated in all the deliberations that took place in the Washington and Cincinnati meetings referred to in the resolution, but under our constitution we could not take action at that time. Action may be taken next month when the Board of Directors meet.

Delegate Burford, Freight Handlers, opposed the recommendation of the committee and urged the adoption of the resolution. He pointed out the unfairness of having to pay a portion of the expense of representatives of the clerks' organization who handled grievances for the Freight Handlers when the Freight Handlers were not given representation in that body. He stated that he was not asking for an international charter, but asking that the Freight Handlers be granted a local charter that would enable them to have their own committees handle their grievances.

Delegate Burford discussed at some length the position of the colored workers represented in the various freight handlers' locals and urged that action be taken at once to relieve the situation, either by granting them charters that would enable them to handle their own grievances, or compel the clerks' organization to remove from its laws the portion which discriminated against the colored workers by refusing them membership.

Delegate Berry, Pressmen: Is it true that the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks have been granted jurisdiction over the freight handlers?

Secretary Morrison: Jurisdiction was not granted, but was simply acquiesced in.

Delegate Berry: Do they refuse to take in the negro freight handlers?

Secretary Morrison: I would like to make an explanation. The question of taking in the colored freight handlers was taken up by the Railway Clerks, and they agreed to issue charters. I think some charters were issued. Then that action was changed, and the officers have been endeavoring to effect a change in their constitution that would allow them to take in all colored workers. The Federation has issued charters to all the Freight Handlers' local unions that have applied for a charter, with an understanding with the Railway Clerks that their representatives will take up the grievances of the Freight Handlers and see that they get the same conditions as received by the members of that organization; and, so far as I know, they have carried that agreement into effect.

Delegate Dee, Railway Clerks, in discussing the question, said: This question is being given every consideration at the present time by our Executive Board. We held two meetings and will hold another meeting in July.

We have handled their cases, and as a member of Board of Adjustment No. 3 I have settled many of the questions that have come through the regular representatives of our organization, and gave the colored brothers every protection that was extended to the whites, who have been paying their dues. I am from the south and I know the economic situation. I worked with them side by side. We have them in our own organizations and they get every protection. We are taking care of their grievances. In the interest of the men themselves who are now being taken care of in federal unions, we hope you will vote for concurrence in the committee's report.

Delegate Lewis, Freight Handlers, opposed the recommendation of the committee and supported the resolution.

Delegate Gorman, Railroad Telegraphers, spoke in favor of the report of the committee and opposed the adoption of the resolution.

Delegate Workman, Longshoremen, opposed the recommendation of the committee and favored the resolution. He spoke of the manner in which the colored freight handlers had supported various strikes on the I.C. and other railroads, and contended that for their loyalty to the organizations with which they are connected or affiliated they deserved more consideration than they were receiving.

Delegate Sumner, Stereotypers, stated that the delegates who were discussing the question were losing sight of the most important part of the resolution, that requiring the Railway Clerks to eliminate the words "only white" from their constitution. In an address of some length he opposed all efforts of labor organizations to discriminate against any workers on account of race or color. He stated that any such discrimination was unfair and un-American.

Chairman Duffy: The resolution asks that we decide who is eligible and who is not eligible to admission to a national organization affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The committee has not that authority, the Executive Council has not that authority, and the convention itself has not that authority. That authority rests only with the national and international unions. The committee and the Executive Council wish to see the colored men organized all over the country. The American Federation of Labor wants them organized. We reaffirm the action taken in the last convention, that if a national or international union refused to accept colored workers the American Federation of Labor will grant them charters.<sup>80</sup>

Delegate Burford: What kind of charters?

Secretary Morrison: As freight handlers.

Delegate Burford: We don't want to be separated, we want the same kind of charters.

Chairman Duffy: When the American Federation of Labor grants charters to the colored workers, no matter of what trade or calling, the American Federation of Labor becomes the national or international union of those men. It is the duty of the American Federation of Labor then to take up the grievances of those workers. Out of the 110 national and international organizations affiliated with the A.F. of L. more than a hundred admit colored members to membership.

Delegate Sweeney, Tailors, asked if it was not contrary to the principles of the American Federation of Labor to allow an affiliated union to draw the color line.

Vice-President Duncan: This American Federation of Labor ever since its organization has stood for organizations without reference to color. It so stands today. This organization that is involved asks for a few more days to allow them to go through their constitutional forms to change their regulations. It is needless to say that as far as the American Federation of Labor is concerned all its influences will be used to have such a constitution changed, because the American Federation of Labor cannot be expected and will not be expected to endorse or favor a charter of any affiliated body that has a word in it discriminatory against a man on account of his color.

Delegate Grange, Seaman, opposed the recommendation of the committee, contending that in a way it endorsed the action of the Clerks' Union in discriminating against colored workers.

Delegate McGlory moved to amend the report by providing that the Railway Clerks' organization be requested to remove the words "white only" from their constitution. (Seconded by Delegate Mary Goff).

Delegate Anderson, Longshoremen, spoke at length in favor of the amendment, and stated in part: I have lived in the south for the best years of my life. I have been face to face with the question of the color line. In Texas

we have dealt with the question fairly and impartially. If we do not see fit to admit the negroes to sit side by side with us in the meetings, which they do not ask, we give them every recognition possible. We give them charters, and when a question that concerns us all is to be considered we sit in conference with them and agree to what is best for all of us. That is why you do not hear these questions coming up from Texas. I do not agree with the report of the committee and think they could have found a better way out if they had tried.

Delegate D'Allessandro: Until you change the law the committee could not make any other report. The Building and Common Laborers have an organization and they have their door wide open. If no one else wants to take these men in we are willing to do it. That is the place for them. The freight handlers are only common laborers and we are willing to take in any of them that see fit to come to us. I am not claiming them, but I want to open some door to those fellows so that the discussion will be closed.

Delegate Foley, Barbers, supported the amendment, and objected to any labor organization excluding colored workers. He called attention to the fact that workers were not excluded from the Journeymen Barbers International Union because of race or color.

Delegate Duncan, (J. A.) Seattle, asked Delegate Foley if his organization did not exclude women from membership.

Delegate Hay again discussed the the question and urged that the matter be left with the Railway Clerks' organization to adjust. He stated that if that were done he could assure the delegates that the question would soon be adjusted to the satisfaction of the members of that organization and to the satisfaction of the labor movement generally.

The amendment to provide that the Railway Clerks be requested to remove the words "white only" from their constitution was carried.

Resolution No. 38--By Delegates Jordan W. Chambers of the Railway Coach Cleaners 16088, St. Louis, Mo.; Eugene Posey of the Coach Cleaners 16331, Kandas City, Mo.; E. L. Rhone of the Central Labor Union, Mobile, Ala.; J. C. Steele, No. 16626, Cincinnati, Ohio; R. Eugene Bellinger, No. 16771, New York, N.Y.; Frank M. Phaire, No. 16702, Philadelphia, Pa.; John H. Smith, No. 15980; Edmund Turner, No. 16199, Mobile, Ala.; Frederick Wilson, Local 16685, Cleveland, Ohio; Robert E. Burford, No. 16220, F. H. & Sta. Employes 16381:

The prosperity, development, advancement and security of a Union under democratic constitutions rest almost wholly upon the contentment of the people they govern, regardless of color, creed or class.

In the matter of opportunities, the National Charter makes no distinction as to color, nor does that charter withhold from any organized body the right to advance educationally, materially or otherwise; and no organization operating under that charter should allow its growth and development to be stultified by a Union seeking only the advancement of its own ends.

The state of unrest which now prevails in the labor world is due almost entirely to the arrogant manifestations of selfishness shown by one Union over another.

The Coach and Car Cleaners of the country have grown to that point in life where they are capable of maintaining themselves independent of any other body, and it is now their firm purpose to assert their right to do so. They will not be cowed down; they will not feed from the hand, nor be pushed into a corner; but will contend on equal terms with the rest for life, liberty and the pursuits of happiness. Hence the following resolution:

WHEREAS, The Coach and Car Cleaners' Local Unions, located in various centers thru-out the United States, have banded themselves together, without regard to race, color or sex, to form a Union which alone will have the jurisdiction over Coach and Car Cleaners of the United States and Canada; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this organization is to promote in the most efficient manner the welfare of Coach and Car Cleaners; and as this end can be attained only thru those competent to know the needs and understand thoroughly the conditions necessary to such promotion, the Union reserves the right to select from among its own members, officers and representatives of every degree whatsoever: therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That an International Charter be granted to the Railway Coach

and Car Cleaners' Union that will have the above jurisdiction and seek to organize, according to the principles of the American Federation of Labor, all workmen of this class, regardless of creed, color or nationality; and, be it further

RESOLVED, And it is resolved, that at each and every Convention which has to do with the wage scale and working conditions of the Coach and Car Cleaners department, the Coach and Car Cleaners shall have a delegate or delegates to represent Coach and Car Cleaners at each of such Conventions; and that each of such delegates be a member of a Coach and Car Cleaners' Local Union and a workman in the Coach and Car Cleaners' department.

THEREFORE, In order to form a more perfect Labor Union, establish as insured justice, provide for the common defence promote the general welfare of ourselves and our employ, we do affirm and adopt this resolution.

Your committee gave a lengthy hearing to all parties interested, on the subject matter contained in this resolution. In the course of the hearing it developed that some few international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor do not as yet admit colored workers to membership. It also developed that the majority, and by far the greater majority of the international unions do admit colored workers to membership, and that these colored workers are entitled to the same rights, benefits and privileges that the other members enjoy. On account of these few international unions refusing colored workers admission, exception is taken. Your committee, however, calls your attention to the section of the Atlantic City Convention of the American Federation of Labor last year on this subject, that:

"Where international unions refuse to admit colored workers to membership, the American Federation of Labor be authorized to organize them under charters from the American Federation of Labor."

We therefore reaffirm our former action on this matter, at the same time calling attention to the fact that the American Federation of Labor does not organize workers of any trade or calling along racial lines.

The report of the Committee on Resolution No. 38 was adopted.

Resolution No. 48--By Delegates Frederick Wilson of Coach and Car Cleaners' Local 16685; Edmund Turner, of the Boiler Makers and Blacksmiths' Local No. 16699; Jordan W. Chambers, of the Coach Cleaners' Union No. 16088, St. Louis, Mo.; James J. Pugh, of No. 16559, B.H.F.H. and S. Men; John H. Smith, of No. 15980 Boiler Makers' Helpers; Noah Alien, No. 16351, Chicago, (Ill.) Coach and Car Cleaners; William Sharon, No. 17165, Freight Handlers, Cleveland, Ohio; Frank Phaire, No. 16702, Coach and Car Cleaners, Philadelphia, Pa.; Abraham Lefkowitz, A.F. & T. Local No. 5:

WHEREAS, The American Federation of Labor has taken a firm position on the claims of negro labor to fair and impartial sharing of the benefits of organized labor; and

WHEREAS, Despite this attitude of the American Federation of Labor, encouraging results have not followed; and millions of negro workingmen continue ignorant of the benefits of collective bargaining, thus militating against the successful operation of the Federation in its fight for a square deal for labor; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor enter upon a campaign of education among both white and colored working men to convince them of the necessity of bringing into the ranks of labor all men who work, regardless of race, creed or color; and be it further

RESOLVED, That, with this end in view, there be called into periodical conference with the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor white and colored leaders who can suitably represent and express the point of view of negro workingmen, and can convey to negro workingmen the good will and sympathy felt by the American Federation of Labor towards them; and be it further

RESOLVED, That there be employed in headquarters at Washington a competent negro agent, taken from the ranks of labor, who will express the hopes and yearnings of negro workingmen to the American Federation of Labor, and in turn be the mouthpiece of the Federation for such messages and information as the Federation may from time to time wish to convey to the negro workers throughout the country; said agent to be the executive secretary and official representative in the interim of meetings of said special committee on negro workers; and be it further



RESOLVED, That this Convention endorse the appointment of negro organizers in all states and for all crafts in which negroes are or may be employed, whose duty will be to build up negro membership.

Your committee recommends that the 2nd and 3rd Resolves be stricken out and that the 4th Resolve be amended to read:

RESOLVED, That negro organizers be appointed where necessary to organize negro workers, under the banner of the American Federation of Labor.

The Resolution would then read as follows:

WHEREAS, The American Federation of Labor has taken a firm position on the claims of negro labor to fair and impartial sharing of the benefits of organized labor; and

WHEREAS, Despite this attitude of the American Federation of Labor, encouraging results have not followed, and millions of negro working men continue ignorant of the benefits of collective bargaining, thus militant against the successful operation of the Federation in its fight for a square deal for labor; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That negro organizers be appointed where necessary to organize negro workers under the banner of the American Federation of Labor.

Your committee concurs in the resolution as amended and refers it to the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor to comply with, if the funds of the Federation will permit.

The report of the committee was adopted unanimously.

Resolution No. 37--By J. W. Chambers, Railway Coach Cleaners, Union No. 16088;

WHEREAS, The interest of the Trade Labor Principle can only be protected by the effort put forth by the wage earners, who are not prejudiced on creed, sex or color:

WHEREAS, The Colored workers have become a factor in the labor world and perform one-seventh of the labor performed in the United States, he is appealing to the trade and labor unions of America in the Convention assembled to adopt such measures and disseminate such principles, whereby he can secure the rights and recognition that he is justly entitled to;

WHEREAS, The Brotherhood of Railway Carmen claim jurisdiction over the Coach Cleaners' classification of work, and the International Brotherhood, Boiler Makers, Blacksmiths and Machinists, deny Colored workers the right to membership on the grounds of racial lines adopted in their constitution. This is itself creates an unrest and distrust among the workers, which will never be removed until such discriminative laws are repealed; be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor Convention assembled take immediate action on enactment of such resolution that will prohibit any International Organization from adopting racial lines in their constitutions.

In the hearing held on this resolution it developed that many of the statements therein contained were incorrect. You will note that the last Whereas specifically states that the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen claim jurisdiction over coach cleaners, and that the Boiler Makers, Blacksmiths and Machinists' organizations deny to colored workers the right to membership on account of racial lines adopted and in their constitutions. For these reasons the convention is asked to take action to prevent any international organization from adopting laws on account of racial lines.

The facts in the case are these: The Brotherhood of Railway Carmen claims jurisdiction over coach and car cleaners, but do not admit to membership colored workers following that occupation on account of the law in their constitutions prohibiting the admission of colored workers. The president of the International Brotherhood of Railway Carmen assured the committee that he will place this matter squarely before his next convention in two forms; first, to admit colored coach and car cleaners to membership in the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen; or, second, failing to do so, to surrender all claim to that class of work.

The Boiler Makers have no law in their constitution prohibiting the admissions of colored workers following their trade or any branch of it. The Blacksmiths issue charters to colored workers of the trade and have no law denying admission to colored workers. The Machinists have nothing in their constitution prohibiting the admission of colored men of the trade.

Your committee, under these circumstances, can only recommend that the

Brotherhood of Railway Carmen eliminate from their constitution all reference to the admission of colored workers.

The report of the committee was adopted.

Delegate Chambers asked permission to make amendment to the committee's report.

The chairman stated that the subject was closed, but if there were no objections Delegate Chambers would be allowed to state his amendment.

Delegate Chambers suggested that the report be amended by the insertion of a provision as to the time the constitution of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen should be amended. He suggested that this be done before the next convention of the American Federation of Labor.

The chairman stated that the motion could not be entertained; that opportunity was given for discussion or amendments before the questions were put, and Delegate Chambers failed to take advantage of it.

President Compers in the chair.

Secretary Conboy: This completes the report of the Committee on Organization.

(Signed)

FRANK DUFFY, Chairman  
SARA A. CONBOY, Secretary  
A. J. KUGLER  
WM. A. NEER  
THOMAS L. FARRELL  
H. L. MORRISON  
W. S. BROWN  
CHARLES H. MOYER  
E. J. MANION  
JOHN P. BURKE  
F. J. MC NULTY  
DAN INGRAHAM  
FRED W. BAER  
LOUIS LANGER  
G. G. JACOBS  
Committee on Organization.

Secretary Conboy: I move the adoption of the report of the committee, as a whole. (Seconded and carried).

Resolution No. 46--Delegate Mat Lewis, Little Rock, Ark.; Freight Handlers No. 16738; Wm. Shaw, Local No. 17165, Cleveland, Ohio; Joe H. Wilcox, Local 16810 B.H.F.H. Station Men; Frederick Wilson, No. 14685, Coach and Car Cleaners, Wichita Falls; James J. Pugh, No. 16559, Cleveland, Ohio; W. M. Carroll, No. 16579, Knoxville, Tenn., Freight Handlers; F. Phaire, No. 16702, Philadelphia Coach and Car Cleaners:

WHEREAS, As a result of the European War, the world is passing through a period of unrest never before known in the annals of history; and

WHEREAS, During this period of unrest citizens are clamoring and pleading for justice from those in power; and

WHEREAS, The American negro fought in the World War for the freedom that is due every human being; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the freedom and democracy thus won by the sacrifices of all should be dispensed regardless of race, creed or color; therefore, be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be forwarded to the national committees of the dominant parties.

The American Federation of Labor has never countenanced the drawing of a color line or discrimination against individuals because of race, creed or color. It recognizes that human freedom is a gift from the Creator to all mankind and is not to be denied to any because of social position or the limitations of caste or class, and that any cause which depends for its success on the denial of this fundamental principle of liberty cannot stand. We therefore concur in the resolution and recommend its adoption.

The report of the committee was adopted.

Delegate Brady, Secretary of the Committee, presented the following report:

Resolution No. 9--By Delegate R. J. Smallwood, of the Railroad Shop Workers' Union No. 16797, Houston, Texas:

RESOLVED, That where there is an organization (colored) that is not eligible to membership in the various white locals (internationals) and have the affiliation with the A.F. of L. that said organizations will cooperate together and said internationals will give them all of the desired support with reference to the six crafts internationals. We want to say further that we believe we can do more to further the interests of this and other (colored) organizations if we can handle our difficulties through the internationals; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That when the internationals get out an agreement the colored union should be included in the agreement, and should have the greatest recognition, as you know the greatest problem before the American people today is the labor question; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we, the Railroad Shop Workers Union No. 16797, composed of colored mechanics and helpers of the six crafts, namely machinists, boiler-makers, blacksmiths, sheet metal workers, carmen, painters and all other trades of wage earners, do solemnly believe that such a step taken as an amendment to the constitution of the A.F. of L., will get us to the four million mark; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That we place ourselves on record before the American Federation of Labor to have them to get the recognition of our Union from the companies in order to remove doubts that may exist in the opinion of the railroad world and general public that this union is a labor organization in the common acceptance of the word.

As the workers referred to in this resolution are already protected in the agreements with the railroad craft organizations, and in the action of the convention on Resolutions Nos. 5 and 37, in the report of the Committee on Organization, this committee believes that no further action is required.

The report of the committee was adopted.

Resolution No. 17--By Delegate Jacob Middleton, of Janitors' Helpers and Laborers Union 16034, Charleston, S.C.:

WHEREAS, We, the Janitors and Laborers of Local 16034, are not being paid the scale of wages that is being paid at Norfolk, Philadelphia, and all other Northern yards; and

WHEREAS, The high cost of living is no lower upon us in Charleston than those in the Northern yards; and

WHEREAS, The scale of wages that is accorded us at the Charleston Navy Yard is not sufficient to provide for ourselves and families; and

WHEREAS, This Local has made protest against the unjust discrimination made against the ratings of Laborers and Janitors in the Charleston Navy Yard; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this convention of the A.F. of L. go on record as being willing to assist in the cause of Local 16034 and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a thorough investigation be given our cause before the Convention assembled at Montreal, Canada.

We recommend that this be referred to the Executive Council to render whatever assistance they can.

The report of the committee was adopted.

*Proceedings of the 40th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1920, pp. 263-64, 272-73, 276-77, 307-11, 351-52, 375, 433.*

### 35. 1925 CONVENTION

#### Organization of Negro Workers

Resolution No. 72--By Delegate Albert C. Campbell, of Federal Labor Union No. 17775:

WHEREAS, The Preamble of the Constitution of the American Federation of Labor declares: "A struggle is going on in all the nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and the oppressed of all countries, a struggle between the capitalist and the laborer, which grows in intensity from year to year, and will work disastrous results to the toiling millions if they are not combined for mutual protection and benefit,"; and

WHEREAS, Among the toiling millions of the United States there are many influences at work which tend to prevent the combination of the workers for mutual protection and benefit, and all such influences are injurious to the working masses and to Organized Labor; and especially the century old custom of workers allowing themselves to be divided into antagonistic groups on the basis of race, color, language, place of birth, sex or religion; and

WHEREAS, More than ten million Negro toilers live and labor in this country, as the most exploited and abused section of the industrial and agricultural workers; and their hope of liberation from their present bondage as a mass can be realized only through organization as an integral part of the labor movement, and through the common action of a united labor movement including all workers without distinction of race or color; and

WHEREAS, The interests of the Negro workers and of the white workers are identical and the interests of Organized Labor no less than of the Negro workers demand that the Negro workers be organized and included without distinction in the Trade Unions, with the full protection of organization extended equally to black and white without prejudice and no progress but only disastrous results can be expected from any exclusion of workers from the Unions on account of race or color; and

WHEREAS, The American Federation of Labor declared officially as far back as the year 1890 that it "looks with disfavor upon trade unions having provisions in their constitutions excluding from membership persons on account of race or color," and requested that such provisions be expunged; and again in 1897, and in 1910, 1917 and 1918 the American Federation of Labor or its officers took actions or made official statements affirming the position; and

WHEREAS, Nevertheless, several of the largest and most important International Unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. as well as some unaffiliated continue to preserve in their constitutions provisions by which workers otherwise eligible are excluded from their ranks because of their race and color, and

WHEREAS, Other affiliated Unions which have no written rules prohibiting the admission of Negroes, do nevertheless in practice generally refrain from enrolling Negroes; or after enrolling them do not grant to these members the same degree of Union protection as is granted to the white members; and

WHEREAS, The effect of such practices, as has been repeatedly indicated by the American Federation of Labor, is to leave a great mass of workers, because of the color of their skin, in a position of great disadvantage, working for lower wages than the union standard, frequently unable to obtain employment because of discrimination not justified by any lack of loyalty to the cause of Labor; and

WHEREAS, The continuation of such provisions and practices undermines the standards of living of all the organized as well as unorganized of whatever race, and constitutes a fatal weakness in the Organized Labor Movement; and

WHEREAS, Compromises on the basis of separate Unions for Negro workers distinct from the white workers have frequently been resorted to and these are only makeshifts which may at times be justifiable as better than no organization at all, but are sometimes justly resented by self-respecting Negro workers as being the preservation of "Jim Crow" institutions; and the problem of organizing the mass of the workers on the basis of solidarity as indicated by our Preamble remains unsolved; and

WHEREAS, Those cases where the white workers and colored workers are enrolled together in the same Unions without distinctions, such as the Mine Workers and the Longshoremen, have proven that in this manner all race and color prejudices and divisions in the ranks of Labor are successfully eliminated; there, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor in its forty-fifth annual convention assembled does hereby declare that any constitutional provisions, rule or practice, whether of official policy or by tacit custom, by which workers are excluded from Trade Unions because of race or color, is contrary and antagonistic to the principles and Constitution of the American Federation

of Labor and to the interests of the masses of workers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor calls upon all affiliated bodies which may have such provisions or customs, to adjust their constitutions and likewise their practices to these principles, so that every worker on a basis of exact equality regardless of color or race may enjoy within the Unions the same rights, privileges, protections, opportunity to obtain employment along with and equal to all other members of the Unions, with the same wages for the same work and the same conditions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the President and Officers of the American Federation of Labor are hereby authorized and instructed to take up this matter with each and every affiliated body, inquiring into the provisions and practices of each in this respect, using such official authority as they possess in urging the International Unions and other affiliated bodies to remove in fact and in form all such discriminations as exist; and the President and Officers of the A.F. of L. shall make public from time to time the progress of such efforts, and shall report to the next convention of the A.F. of L. whatever results may be obtained in regard to each affiliated body separately and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor shall with the greatest possible dispatch and energy proceed with a campaign to organize all Negro workers in the same Unions with the white workers wherever this can be done under present conditions; and where it is unavoidable to organize the Negro workers into separate Unions, but at the same time to take up with the existing Unions the question of combining the organized Negro workers with the existing Unions which for the time being may refuse to admit them; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the most effective and sincere manner by which the American Federation of Labor can ensure a response to its efforts to organize the Negro workers is to take up in an aggressive and whole-hearted manner the cause and demands to which they are entitled to all the rights, benefits and privileges specified in their laws. The discrimination and abuses, such as lynching, segregation, disfranchisement, etc.; so that Organized Labor becomes the champion of the Negro's social demands as the demands of the most abused and exploited section of the working; and the President and Officers of the American Federation of Labor are authorized and instructed accordingly.

The American Federation of Labor from its birth favored and advocated the organization of all wage workers irrespective of race, color or creed. The A.F. of L. has organized the colored workers. The A.F. of L. proposes to continue to organize them.

Of the 107 National and International Unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. at least 100 admit colored workers to membership, National and International Unions not admitting colored workers to membership were informed by the Buffalo, N.Y., and St. Paul, Minn., Conventions of the A.F. of L., that if they did not admit colored workers to membership, the A.F. of L. would organize and charter them direct.

This has been done. All of which your committee concurs in and recommends that the work of organizing colored workers be persistently continued.

The report of the committee was adopted by unanimous vote.

Delegate Conboy: Mr. Chairman, this completes the report of the committee, which is signed:

FRANK DUFFY, Chairman;  
THOMAS S. FARRELL,  
CHARLES A. MOYER,  
E. J. MANION,  
JOHN P. BURKE,  
MARTIN T. JOYCE,  
I. M. ORNBURN,  
W. N. REDDICK,  
PATRICK E. GORMAN,  
GERTRUDE MCNALLY,  
D. W. HELT,  
PHILIP BOCK,  
E. E. MILLIMAN,  
ROE H. BAKER,  
C. J. GOLDEN,  
SARA A CONBOY, Secretary.

Delegate Conboy moved the adoption of the committee's report as a whole. The motion was seconded and carried, and the committee discharged with a vote of thanks.

Delegate Wall, secretary of the Committee on Resolutions, directed attention to a typographical error in the proceedings, page 321 of the ninth day, relative to Resolution No. 76. He stated that the committee recommended non-concurrence in this resolution and not concurrence.

The correction was made a matter of record.

*Proceedings* of the 45th annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1925, pp. 322-25.

### 36. 1933 CONVENTION

#### Negro Labor Organizers

Resolution No. 85--By Delegate A. Philip Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters Union No. 18068, New York, N.Y.

WHEREAS, Negroes constitute one-tenth and a little more of the population of the United States which is about the size of the entire population of the Dominion of Canada which indicates the great importance of Negro workers in American industry, especially when it is considered that a larger ratio of Negroes work, when permitted, than any other group in the country;

WHEREAS, Since the World War Negro workers have become a large and significant factor in the basic industries such as steel, coal, railroads, packing, automotive and rubber; and

WHEREAS, Because of the existence of racial barriers against Negro workers in certain trade unions which has resulted in inculcating, engendering and fostering distrust and suspicion of white trade unionists that inevitably creates division and weakness in the labor movement; be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor in its 53rd annual convention go on record to enlist and employ Negro Labor Organizers as paid and volunteer organizers to help carry forward the aggressive and constructive organization campaign now being conducted by the American Federation of Labor under the National Recovery program, and thereby bring about a better and finer feeling of cooperation between the black and white workers of America and strengthen and consolidate the position for effective collective bargaining of organized labor in the United States of America.

Your committee recommends that this resolution be referred to the Executive Council to be put into effect if the funds of the Federation permit.

Delegate Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters' Union: I have raised this question because of the great importance at the present time of carrying forward the movement of organization of the workers. I have been told in the convention by some of the delegates from the South, especially in the tidewater district, that the employers in the shipyards have been pitting the white and black workers against each other in order that they might weaken the forces of organized labor in that section. They have indicated to me that it has been difficult for them to meet with the Negro workers and organize them, and consequently they want some Negro organizers to assist them.

I have also been told about the attempt in Alabama on the part of some of the trade union groups to organize the Negro workers. All these efforts are commendable and praiseworthy, but they need to be helped by some Negro organizer who can make an effective approach to the Negro workers. We are living at a time when the National Recovery Act is being presented to the country, and it seems to me the only way for the NRA to be effective is for all the workers in the country, regardless of creed, nationality or color to be organized so that there may be an economic balance maintained. If that is not done it seems to me NRA will fail, because, fundamentally, the success of NRA depends upon the increased purchasing power of the people in this country, and the workers constitute a large majority of the purchasing people of the country. Therefore, the raising of wages depends upon collective bargaining and collective bargaining depends upon organizing power.

The Negroes constitute a large section of the population of America, one tenth or more, and we are living in a time when the great business interests of

the country are fundamentally opposed to the labor clauses of the NRA. There are probably 99 per cent of the employers of the country who are fundamentally opposed to the labor clauses of the NRA. They are going to employ every device to weaken and to sabotage this Act. One of the devices they will employ is race prejudice. Already they are saying there should be a differentiation between the black and white workers in industry. That is calculated to increase competition between the white and the black workers, and that will engender hostility and antagonism, and consequently you can readily see that it is important that organized labor remove from the hands of the employing class the weapon of race prejudice. That can only be done by going out and organizing the black workers in large numbers. I realize that among the Negro workers there is a new spirit; they are eager to come into the ranks of organized labor, but there still exists some barriers in the unions against the Negro workers. It is to be hoped that these barriers will be broken down, for we are living in a time when all labor ought to be in the organization.

The Sleeping Car Porters are doing their part to organize the Negro workers. We want to come into your group and give as much cooperation as possible. The cooperation the Sleeping Car Porters will give will be absolutely without cost, but there should be some paid Negro organizer to go out and bring the Negro workers into the fold.

Vice President Duffy, Chairman of the committee: Your committee is not opposing the resolution; we report favorably upon it, but we refer it to the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor to put into effect if the cost will permit. We are in favor of organizing the colored workers--all workers, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled.

The report of the committee was unanimously adopted.

#### Equal Rights for Negro Workers

Resolution No. 97--By Delegate R. Suny, of the Cleaners, Dyers, Spotters and Pressers Union No. 18233, New York, N.Y.

WHEREAS, The negro workers in the United States are the last ones to be hired and the first ones to be fired; are the most underpaid and the most exploited; and

WHEREAS, Race discrimination and jimcrowism are means to divide the workers, holding them back from united struggles against the attack of the employers; and

WHEREAS, It was long since recognized by organized labor in the United States of America that the freedom of the white wage earner cannot be won without the freedom of his black brother; be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor, at its 53rd Annual Convention, in Washington, D.C., demands the elimination of all clauses which have any suggestion of discrimination against negro workers, from all A.F. of L. International, National and Federal Union Constitutions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this 53rd American Federation of Labor Convention demands equal rights for the negro worker in the union, in the shop and on the job.

The question of discrimination against negro workers has been before the conventions of the American Federation of Labor for many years. At the Cincinnati Convention last year the committee on organization made a lengthy report on a resolution similar to the one we have now before us. We showed that many declarations were made from time to time by the American Federation of Labor in favor of negro workers and called attention to the fact that the American Federation of Labor admits all classes of workers--skilled and unskilled--to its ranks irrespective of creed, color, sex, race or nationality.

We called attention to the action of the Atlantic City Convention of the American Federation of Labor held in June, 1919, wherein it was decided that where International Unions refuse to admit colored workers to membership, the American Federation of Labor, be authorized to organize them under charters from the American Federation of Labor. At our convention last year this declaration was reaffirmed as all workers are eligible to membership in the American Federation of Labor irrespective of creed, nationality, sex or politics. Your Committee re-endorses the action taken last year on this matter.

The report of the committee was unanimously adopted.

## 37. PROTEST DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NEGRO WORKERS UNDER NRA

Resolution No. 87--By Delegate A. Phillip Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters Union No. 18068.

WHEREAS, Negro workers are being notoriously victimized in various sections of the country in the form of being displaced by white workers when the minimum wage rate is applied; and

WHEREAS, Negro workers are being deprived of certain benefits under the N.R.A. since they, especially, in the textile industry fall within a category, to which the provisions of the National Recovery program will not apply until a later date in January, 1934; and

WHEREAS, The application of unfavorable wage differentials in certain industries in the South are made to bear heavily upon Negro workers who constitute a large labor factor in these industries; and

WHEREAS, This wage differential policy with respect to groups of workers is alleged to be based upon differential in productive efficiency and living costs; and

WHEREAS, Responsible production statistics in relation to Negro workers compiled during and after the World War period indicate that the charge of production inefficiency is without basis in fact, and that certain groups of Negro workers have the same level of productive efficiency of similar groups of white workers and that the level of productivity of certain groups of Negro workers is higher and lower than some groups of white workers; and

WHEREAS, Wage income determines cost of living standards and renders it wholly unscientific to relate wage rates to racial factors; and

WHEREAS, It is a dangerous precedent and definite menace to the organized labor movement to permit the government to promulgate and execute a wage policy, expressing differentials that can only result in creating competition between the workers that will accrue to the benefit of the employing class; be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor in its 53rd convention held in Washington, D.C., does herewith condemn the policy of wage differentials based upon sectional or racial grounds and herewith calls upon the National Recovery Administration heads and the President of the United States to eliminate said policy in the interest of economic justice to the Negro workers in particular, the American workers in general and raising the purchasing power of the entire working class as a whole.

Your committee recommends adoption of Resolution No. 87.

The report of the committee was unanimously adopted.

*Proceedings of the 53rd annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1933, pp. 193-95, 197, 268-70, 523.*

## 38. 1935 CONVENTION

Delegate Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters: I rise because the Sleeping Car Porters are interested in the report by the Executive Council on the matter of discrimination against negroes. This report has been so handled as to delay its presentation at this convention until the time when it will not be possible to have a full discussion. I think that that smacks of a very questionable procedure in this matter. Therefore, I think it is very, very important that this convention listen to a discussion of the report on discrimination in trade unions against negro workers. This phase of the matter is just as important as anything that has appeared in this convention.

I take it that there have been three important questions before the convention; one, industrial unionism, one the Labor Party, and this race question. So I want to request Mr. Chairman, that the convention be permitted to listen to a discussion of the question of discrimination in trade unions against negro workers. It is a very important matter. The report which has been made is very inaccurate, fragmentary and absolutely unsound and ought to be examined by the convention.



Delegate Feeney: As the mover of the motion, I have no objection if we consider the resolution he speaks of.

President Green: Are there any objections to delaying putting the motion before the convention until we dispose of the question raised by Delegate Randolph?

Delegate Duncan, Seattle Central Labor Union: I would like to ask what resolution the brother might object to. Are we going to be governed by the objections of one individual, or are we going to act democratically?

President Green: The convention can direct the Chairman and the officers of the convention what it wishes to do. The Chair asks if the mover of the motion will withhold the motion until after we have disposed of the question raised by Delegate Randolph.

Delegate Feeney: I will agree with that.

President Green: Then the motion is withheld, and after that the convention will have a chance to vote on the motion.

Delegate Duncan, Seattle: Might I ask for another exception in the case of Resolution No. 206, introduced by the Washington State Federation of Labor?

President Green: The convention can determine that after it disposes of this question.

The Chair submits the supplemental report to which Delegate Randolph refers--the supplemental report of the Executive Council, and the committee, as I understand it, recommends concurrence in the report.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL COLORED WORKERS

The 1934 San Francisco Convention of the American Federation of Labor directed the President to appoint a committee of five to investigate the conditions of the colored workers of this country. Pursuant to this direction a committee consisting of John E. Rooney, Operative Plasterers and Cement Finishers, John Brophy, United Mine Workers of America, John W. Garvey, International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers' Union, Jerry L. Hanks, The Journeymen Barbers International Union and T. C. Carroll, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees were appointed.

The Committee conducted an investigation and obtained considerable information on the subject. Opportunity was afforded those interested to present their views.

The report of the Committee indicates that there are a few National and International Unions that deny membership to Negroes. In most of these instances special provisions are made to organize the Negroes into Federal Labor Unions directly chartered by the American Federation of Labor. In some National and International Unions admitting Negroes they are placed in separate local unions with varying rights of membership.

We are of the opinion that since each affiliated National and International Union has complete autonomy that the welfare of the Negro worker will be best served by a campaign of education of white workers to bring to them the necessity of solidarity in the ranks of the workers and the voluntary elimination of all restrictions against full rights of membership to the Negro.

The American Federation of Labor has consistently advocated the organization of all workers and we reaffirm that policy. The economic welfare of the workers can best be served by complete unity of purpose and action. We therefore recommend that all National and International Unions and the American Federation of Labor conduct a continuous campaign of education to bring to the white worker the necessity for greater unity of the workers in the labor movement to the end that all discrimination against Negroes will be removed.

Your Committee has considered the Supplemental Report of the Executive Council dealing with the Committee having investigated the conditions of the colored workers of this country and recommends concurrence in the Executive Council's Report.

Delegate Randolph, *Sleeping Car Porters*: Mr. Chairman and delegates to the convention of the American Federation of Labor--the report of the Executive Council I consider quite inadequate; it does not meet the issue in any respect, and, in the first place, it has not followed the procedure laid down by the San Francisco Convention. I wish to read from the records of the San Francisco Convention relating to this question.

In that convention Delegate Hutcheson, *Carpenters*, asked: "What was the final recommendation of the committee?" The Organization Committee non-concurred in the resolution, which dealt with discrimination against Negro workers.

Then Delegate Hutcheson moved as an amendment: "Therefore, I move as an amendment to the committee's report that there be a committee of five appointed by the president of the American Federation of Labor to investigate the conditions of the colored workers of this country and report to the next convention."

That report was not made here by the committee which was appointed by President Green. President Green appointed five persons on that committee as follows: John G. Rooney, Operative Plasterers and Cement Finishers; John Brophy, United Mine Workers of America; John Garvey, International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers Union; Jerry L. Hanks, Journeymen Barbers International Union; and P. C. Carroll, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. These were the men who were appointed on that committee. They were bona fide trade unionists, men in organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The committee met in Washington and held hearings for two days. Representatives of various Negroes organizations appeared and presented data with regard to discrimination against Negro workers. The committee considered the recommendation for holding regional hearings in the centers where Negroes were in great numbers working at various industries, New York, St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago--places of that sort. The committee made its recommendation to the Executive Council. The Executive Council appointed one of its members to make the report of the matter. This is the report, but the recommendations of the committee appointed by President Green are not in this report. I think they should be included. As a matter of fact, this report of the Executive Council I will regard as merely a dignified, diplomatic camouflage.

This is the report which was made by the committee appointed by President Green, signed by four of the members of the committee of five. It reads:

"First. That all International Unions, who bar Negroes from membership in any way or discriminate against them through separate local systems or forbid them representation at conventions or on committees, will take up the Negro question at their next convention for the purpose of harmonizing constitution, rules and practices to conform with the oft-repeated declaration of A.F. of L. conventions on equality of treatment of all races within the trade union movement.

"Second. All charters issued by A.F. of L. shall be in conformity with both declared policy and law on the subject of membership.

"Third. The A.F. of L. through its officers, the American Federationist, A.F. of L. Weekly News Service, Workers Education Bureau and other mediums, conduct a continuous active campaign of education within the trade union movement on the Negro problem. The purpose being to get the white worker to see more completely the weakness of division and the necessity of greater trade union unity between white and black workers to the end that all workers may be organized.

"Respectfully submitted,

"John E. Rooney,

"John Brophy,

"T. C. Carroll,

"John W. Garvey."

Now, I want to know why these recommendations were not included in this report and presented to this convention. As a matter of fact, the motion in the San Francisco Convention provided that both recommendations and findings should be presented to this convention. And, by the way, the findings are important because they represent the basis upon which those conclusions were drawn.

Now, fellow delegates, it is not the purpose of the Sleeping Car Porters to claim that all of the unions of the American Federation of Labor discriminate against Negro workers. The United Mine Workers, the Hod Carriers, Butcher Workmen, International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, the Carpenters, Teamsters and unions of that sort include Negroes in their membership; but other unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor either have color clauses in their constitutions of color pledges in their rituals that directly bar Negroes from the unions. Not only that, but there are other devices and subtle ways by which some of the unions that do not have these color clauses discriminate against Negro members.

We have had the occasion to examine material presented to us again and again where Negroes have gone to certain jobs to work and they were told by

the contractor: "You cannot work here because you haven't a union card. You have got to get a union card." Then the Negroes went to the unions and asked for a card. They were told they could not get cards unless they were working on the job. You can readily see what a dilemma certain groups of Negroes are in because of this discrimination practiced by some of the unions.

The report of the Council states that provision is made for the organization of Negroes in Federal unions. We find that the Federal unions that include Negroes are racial unions. There is no justification for a racial Federal union. There is no more justification for it than to have Federal unions based upon sex or religion or nationality. It is against that very thing the Negro workers are protesting, and consequently the report of the Executive Council does not meet the issue presented.

Let us take the freight and express handlers. They are under the jurisdiction of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks. The Brotherhood of Railway Clerks is supposed to make agreements covering all the workers that come under their jurisdiction. Now, the freight handlers and express workers in the various Federal unions have no power to negotiate an agreement concerning rates of pay or working rules, and yet the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks has no machinery whereby the members of these Federal unions may present their grievances to that organization, to the end that that organization may properly adjust those grievances.

The national unions that cover Negroes who are members of the Federal unions say they make agreements for these Negro workers. Under the Railway Labor Act as amended by the 73rd Congress you have definite ways in which grievances are handled. Now a Federal union where Negroes are members--let us say one of those members discharged by the carriers. That union hasn't the right nor the power to present a grievance to the National Railroad Board of Adjustment. The Federal union is an isolated, separate body, it has no connection. For instance, a Federal labor union in Chicago has no connection with the Federal union in New York. They have no national structure, and therefore cannot make use of the Railway Labor Act. They have no way to appeal to the National Labor Board.

A Federal union based upon race is a dual union, because the National union covers the same class of workers that are covered in the Federal union. The Federal union has no power under the law.

The Federal form of organization that the American Federation of Labor provide for Negro workers is virtually no organization at all. I know of no Federal union of Negro workers which has negotiated a contract with the employers; consequently you can see that the Federal unions, as organized by the American Federation of Labor, neither have the power to protect the interests of the Negro workers nor does the Federal unions organize Negro workers to any appreciable extent. Therefore it is purely evasion of the question to point to the fact that the American Federation of Labor has such Federal unions.

The Negroes in the Federal unions have found that in some instances, although they get the results, they are called upon to pay fees to various agents that come around and pretend they are going to get results for them. Now we are calling upon this convention to give serious consideration to this question. We have evaded it for a long time, there is a conspiracy of silence on the question right here in this convention, because there is no reason why the supplemental report of the Executive Council should be presented to the convention about the time we are ready to adjourn. In order that we might be able to meet this issue properly we have got to be frank, honest, and candid about it. There may be claims to the effect that the Negroes have not joined the trade movement in as large numbers as they ought to join. That is like a policeman knocking a man down on the sidewalk and arresting him for blocking the traffic.

The Sleeping Car Porters want this convention to know that the Negro workers want to come into the American Federation of Labor, they want to share in the defense and help bear the burdens. We want to go through all the trials and tribulations with the white workers. They want to stand arm to arm and shoulder to shoulder and face the problems as they are. They don't want charity, they don't want philanthropy, they want to come into the American Federation of Labor on a basis of equality with other workers. Whenever one group of workers is barred the stigma of inferiority is attached to them.

No national or international organization in the American Federation of Labor has the moral right to claim the privilege and the right to write an

agreement covering the wages and working conditions for a given class of workers and then except a section of those workers because of race or color. No national or international union has a right to claim the benefits of Federal legislation which gives them the right to negotiate a contract on the basis of majority representation, and then keep a part of the workers from enjoying that privilege.

There is no reason why any national organization should attempt to evade that issue and run to the refuge of trade autonomy. That question has been raised from time to time, but this convention has found ways to deal with organizations that discriminate against workers in other cases. The Federation in this convention forced a certain department, the Building Trades, to accept certain national and international unions. If the Federation can do that it also, by the same token, is able to compel certain national and international unions not to discriminate against workers because of the accident of color or race.

The American Federation of Labor has taken cognizance of racketeering as a general proposition. There is no more reason why the convention should not take cognizance of race discrimination and wipe it out. We do not claim that all the organizations affiliated with the Federation discriminate against Negro workers. A number of them accept Negro workers. Negroes constitute one-tenth of the population of America, they constitute a larger proportion than there are people in Canada.

The Sleeping Car Porters conquered the Pullman Company, and on the board of directors of that company were J. Pierpont Morgan, Mellon and Whitney. The Sleeping Car Porters conquered this mighty corporation in ten years of struggle. This is an indication that Negroes will stand up and fight for their rights just as well as white workers will. There is no reason under the sun why an organization of labor which is interested in the organization of workers, regardless of race, creed or color, should single out the Negro workers and attach to them the stigma of inferiority and say, "Although you are workers, you haven't the right to join an organization. We will make contracts for you but you will not have a voice in the organization making the contract." Think of a national organization making a contract for a group of workers and not allowing those workers to have a voice in the determination of that contract. That is a reflection upon the spirit of this great organization.

We are living in times of storm and stress. Right here on this floor experiences were related where men in a certain village were shot down. It showed that the employer was not concerned about race or color. Then why should the worker be concerned about race or color? The labor organizations will always suffer, the American Federation of Labor will always suffer for that fact until it is corrected.

No doubt there is considerable power possessed by this organization, but, after all, when there is a fundamental error in the philosophy, in the program of an organization based upon the exclusion of a worker because of the accident of his color, that is certainly a serious handicap.

Why should a Negro worker be penalized for being black; why should anybody be penalized for something over which he has no control? The American Federation of Labor will not be able to hold its head up and face the world so long as it permits any section of workers in America to be discriminated against because they happen to be black. We are living in a time when there should be no division of race, religion, creed or nationality. The workers are facing the possibility of the abrogation of civil and political rights, because in every industrial crisis in America the civil liberties of the workers have been abrogated. It happened in a San Francisco general strike, it happened in Toledo, it happened in Minneapolis, it happened in the textile workers' strike.

In Arkansas the share cropper decided to organize. They were both white and black. Black and white organizers were sent there and talked to the share croppers, and the white share croppers were thrown out of their shacks and left on the roadside to suffer. Both black and white workers were misled. The black workers were told, "Don't have anything to do with that white worker because he lynches you." They then go to the white worker and say, "You are better than these black workers, you are of a superior race, you are a Nordic." As a result they were able to exploit both classes of workers.

Not until the workers themselves understand that there is no fundamental difference between the white and black workers, that it is all superficial, that there is no difference in the capacity of black and white workers,

their brains are alike, their physical makeup is the same, except that there is a different pigment in the black man's skin.

The workers in America have been victimized by propaganda by people who are keeping the workers divided because they know what a power they will be when once they are united, when once they are bound together in one organization fighting for one object.

I have this report and recommendation presented by the committee appointed by President Green, signed by four members of that committee. I move that this report be adopted by the convention as the spirit of this convention in order that the world may know that the Federation is taking a different position on that question of the Negro, and that it is looking upon every worker as a worker, whether he is black or white, Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant.

Secretary Frey: I desire to approve both of the Executive Council's report and the report of your committee on that report. I am in very large agreement with what the delegate has just said. I sympathize deeply with his problems, I know something of what it is through personal contact. Thirty-five years ago, against the objections of the members of my local union in Chattanooga, Tennessee, I organized a union of Negro molders and my reward was an attempt to run me out of town by the white molders and foundry workers.

My regret is that an outstanding member of his race should have felt the report of the Executive Council is evasive and insufficient. That will be published in the report. It will be widely read, and every one interested in the Negroes' welfare and in his rights will find that this outstanding delegate, whom we all have an affection for, said the Executive Council's report was not only inadequate, in his opinion, but was evasive.

Like many other delegates in this convention I have the privilege of associating with leaders of the Negro race. Let us recognize the fact that all human beings are the children of the same Creator, but although we recognize that we cannot escape the fact that in some parts of the world some of the Creator's children have a prejudice against others. I accept the responsibility of the trade union movement to break down that prejudice, and I think I am not exaggerating when I say the efforts of the American Federation of Labor have done more to break down racial prejudice, particularly in the South, than all the other institutions which the South has.

In my organization in the South and in many others we have broken down the prejudice so much that when the Negro becomes a member of the union he sits with the other members. But there is a prejudice in the South which has not been overcome yet. The Christian churches have not been able to overcome it. The large number of members of the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church are in the South, yet there remains something in the South which makes it necessary on Sunday morning or Sunday evening for members of these two religions to go their separate churches. Christianity in the South has not been able to break down the prejudice to the extent that both races can meet together.

We have gone farther than that. There is a danger that we may create prejudice instead of breaking it down if we make too strong an effort in that direction. I knew the beloved Booker T. Washington as a man and I admired him because of the work he did. He knew of the efforts I was making to break down racial prejudice on the part of any trade unionist, and as I was meeting with difficulty I requested him to give me a letter saying he favored the Negroes becoming members of our trade unions. I knew he could not publish it through the press. I wanted a letter to use when I came in contact with his people. He declined to give me that letter, and I agreed that his reasons for doing so were sound. He said, in substance, "If I should give you such a letter and it should be known the manufacturers in the South would allow members of my race to be discriminated against by the employers. They would not want members of the Negro race in their factories because they might be organized." Because of my close association with leaders of the colored race, when I became a member of the Labor Advisory Board, NRA, the national secretary of the leading Negro organizations in the country wrote to me and said, in substance, "We know we can depend upon you because you understand the problems. We expect that you will see that the Negro receives the same minimum wage rate as the white in the codes."

Now, everybody knows the struggle we had to prevent differences in the wage rates, particularly in the South. The minimum rates in the South were there, not so much to protect the whites, but to protect the Negroes. He said in substance, "These codes which have been enacted are working to the

benefit of the whites, where the hourly rate has been raised from 10 and 12 to a minimum of 25 cents, but the employers in the South refuse to give our race any chance of employment, saying if we have to pay those rates we will employ whites."

It seems to me that in reaching a declaration upon this subject it should be phrased so that no additional race prejudice will be created, but rather that through the sane, practical, educational methods which have brought about the organization of so many Negro workers, we carry on the work we have been doing. I hope the Council's report will be adopted and the committee's report adopted.

President Green: The President of the American Federation of Labor should say a word just now, because it is quite evident that there is need of making clear to the delegates some facts in connection with this matter, and in doing so I speak as a friend of the colored worker and one who has endeavored to make his contribution toward the adjustment of this problem to which Delegate Randolph has referred. I gave earnest support to the organization of the Sleeping Car Porters from the beginning. I attended a number of mass meetings composed of Sleeping Car Porters and I appealed to them to join the Sleeping Car Porters Federal Labor Union. I spoke in churches and in different places in presenting the attitude and the position of the American Federation of Labor toward this subject. I made it clear that so far as the American Federation of Labor itself is concerned it extends to the colored workers a most cordial invitation to become members of organized labor, to unite with us, to join with us, and to enjoy all of the rights and privileges of the American Federation of Labor. The American Federation of Labor can do no more. As evidence of its attitude, the Sleeping Car Porters are organized very largely.

A number of International Unions admit colored workers to membership without reservation or restriction. I think one hundred out of the one hundred and five international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor admit colored workers to membership, they have removed all bars on account of color. But the proposition of Delegate Randolph goes further than that. It proposed that this American Federation of Labor compel national unions to change their laws in their constitutions so as to provide for the free unrestricted admission of colored workers to membership. That is a very fundamental question that has been referred to here by speakers on numerous occasions during this convention. Has the American Federation of Labor the authority to say to an autonomous International Union how it shall draft its laws. What provisions for admission of membership shall it make?

We very jealously guarded that principle today when we decided that while the American Federation of Labor could provide that Communists could not act as delegates in central bodies and State Federations of Labor, we could not go further than that and invade the jurisdictional field of national and international unions.

If there are any organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor who do not admit colored workers to membership, if they would accept my advice they would remove the bar for I believe we ought to make provision for the admission of these members. But that is neither here nor there. The national and international unions must decide that question for themselves, and I think the report of the committee to which Delegate Randolph refers provides that if in the future the American Federation of Labor issues charters to national and international unions, it must stipulate that the laws of this union must provide for the admission of colored workers into membership. Can we go that far? Upon what basis do we rest? Do we give national and international unions autonomous rights? Can we suspend the charter of the international union because it does not provide for the admission of colored members? Can we do that? Would you be willing to order that done? Are you ready to do that?

There may be one or two national unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor whose membership would say to the representatives of those members in convention assembled, we will withdraw from the American Federation of Labor before we will be subjected to such dictates. That is the point involved. That is the question.

Now we believe that education will finally overcome that conditions, that eventually through persuasion, through appeal, through the economic and social laws all prejudice will be overcome, that national and international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor will so broaden their organic

law as to provide for the admission of all members. But that is for them to decide. Now the American Federation of Labor, as I have said, has made a declaration on that subject, and they recommend to national and international unions that colored workers may be admitted freely and upon a basis of equality. Out of 105 of these national and international unions, 100 have carried out that recommendation. Now in order to make it clear and definite the American Federation of Labor has said, well and good, if there is any international union that has a bar to these workers we will take them in ourselves by granting Federal charters. Their Federal charters are not granted because we want to emphasize the color question or to isolate them, but they were granted to accommodate the needs of the colored workers who come under the jurisdiction of national and international unions that yet retained in their organic laws a clause that made it impossible for the Negro workers to be admitted. Could we do more?

I don't know why the American Federation of Labor is repeatedly denounced by those who represent Negro academic organizations as standing in the way of admission of colored workers when we have made our declaration, we stand up and defend it. We appealed to all national unions to respond to our recommendation, and we say to those who will not, if you won't take them in, we will take them in and try to protect their interests.

Now upon the report of the committee--the report of the committee to which Delegate Randolph refers was referred to the Council at its last meeting. The Council decided to refer that to a sub-committee made up of Vice-President Harrison, to prepare a report based upon the recommendations of the committee. Brother Harrison was immediately pressed into service as a mediator in the Building Trades dispute. He was occupied for days in that. Surely he ought to be commended for that service and he told me that just as soon as he could prepare this report he would do so. He prepared it and handed it to me yesterday. The discussion has been so continuous that it seemed impossible to submit it ere this. There is the answer. There has been no desire to evade. It has just been a part of the administrative difficulties that your Chairman has been compelled to face during the proceedings of this convention.

There it is. Do we want to follow the recommendation of the Council or do we want to say to national and international unions, you must change your laws? Is the American Federation of Labor to say what the laws of national and international unions shall be, what the qualifications of membership shall be, what members they shall admit, the national unions having full power to determine who they shall admit and who they shall reject? That is the question? I wish they would change their point of view, but only education and persuasion will bring that about.

I agree with the economic philosophy expounded by Delegate Randolph, that a colored worker is a competitive worker of the white worker, and that if the employer can get the colored worker cheaper than he can get the white worker doing the same work the employer will employ him. There is great need for him to become organized and associated with the American Federation of Labor, but the abstract philosophy of that question in no way effects the administrative policies of national and international unions. There is the issue, there are the facts presented to you in the fairest possible way that I can present them without prejudice--just the facts as they are for your consideration.

Delegate Knight, *Railway Car Men*: Mr. President, I am not going to impose upon this convention at this late hour by discussing the question before the convention. My purpose in arising is to correct an impression that Delegate Randolph left with this delegation insofar as it applies to National Adjustment Boards covering the mechanical department employes on the railroad and the application of agreements that are negotiated by their mechanical department crafts.

The agreements that we negotiate for the mechanical department employes on the railroad cover every employe in that department, white or black, male or female, insofar as increases in pay, shortening of hours or working conditions are concerned. If an employee, black or white, has a grievance, under those agreements it will be handed to the National Adjustment Board, Second Division. I was afraid he left the impression that there was no way, and if I did not misunderstand him he said so. If he will read the hearings before the Congressional Committee he will find that we told the Committee in the hearings that we represented all employes and would handle their grievances under the Emergency Railway Act providing for Adjustment Boards, which has now become a part of the permanent law, and we will do that.

Delegate Webster, *Sleeping Car Porters*: I rise, Mr. Chairman and delegates to express the appreciation of the Sleeping Car Porters for the very splendid cooperation that we have obtained from President Green and the American Federation of Labor, which has to a large extent contributed to the success of the Sleeping Car Porters' organization. But I want to augment the remarks of my fellow delegate, Brother Randolph, with respect to the Federal union method of organizing Negro workers.

For some twenty years or more I have been actively engaged in the organization of workers throughout the length and breadth of this land. Some six or seven years ago we were given Federal Charters by the American Federation of Labor to organize the Pullman Porters. We found that we could not organize 8,000 Pullman Porters stretching from New York to San Francisco and from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Miami, Florida, under Federal charters, and as a consequence we had to maintain a national organization.

The Pullman Company, in one of its arguments against the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and in support of the company unions, when appearing at the hearings of the Congressional Committee held in Washington, no doubt on the reports of the financial secretary of the convention of the American Federation of Labor, attempted to show that committee that we only had 600 members in our organization, by reason of the fact that we are only paying per capita tax on 600 members. The fact was that we had to maintain a national organization and therefore, we had to keep our per capita tax down to a skeleton in order that we might have funds to carry on this national organization, and had we not carried on this national organization we could not, even with the assistance of the American Federation of Labor have been able to perfect an organization of the Sleeping Car Porters. We have every confidence in the fact that President William Green is very sincere in his attitude toward helping the colored workers. He appeared in our meetings in Chicago and in New York, and there expressed himself in unequivocal terms as to how he stood on this proposition. But in the practical application of the problem of organizing the Negro workers under Federal unions it does not work. In my organization activities, since I have been a part of the American Federation of Labor I have used every possible effort to try to get the colored workers to come into the American Federation of Labor.

I will cite an instance in Chicago, in the express industry, an organization composed of 150 men. The Railway Clerks, as you know, have a color clause in their constitution for some reason. A man by the name of Brown, some eight or nine years ago connected with the Railway Clerks decided that Negroes working in that industry should be organized. He was around there a year or more and he did not make much headway and finally they asked if we would do anything for them. Thereupon I took upon myself the responsibility of assisting in the organization of that particular local. I don't know what the form of organization was at first, but at any rate, Brown was eliminated and a man by the name of Shoals came on the scene and he got a charter for a Federal Labor Union for this group of men. He asked me if I would cooperate with him. We invited him to our headquarters and for three or four years up until recently, I took an active part in organizing this particular Federal union, so that at the present time I believe they have almost every Negro who operates in the express industry in the capacity of a freight handler in this particular union.

It was because of persuasion that I used upon those colored men that they accepted membership in that, in spite of the fact that the particular union that was trying them had a color clause in their organization. This organization has perfected itself and is going along nicely. Agreements are being handled and the men have derived some benefit to a large extent. But now the complaints come to me that "you told us to go into this organization, now that we are in here why can't we become members of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, just like the freight handlers that work next to us. We do the same work and get the same pay. So far as it has gone, well enough, but we don't see why we can't become members of this organization of Railway Clerks."

I heard the President make the inquiry of why these very drastic tirades were directed against the American Federation of Labor by a certain organization representing a large number of Negro people. It is true that those associations have directed attacks toward the American Federation of Labor, but the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in spite of the fact that we do not feel this matter has been given the proper consideration by the American Federation of Labor, have never failed to defend the principles and the program of the



American Federation of Labor and on many occasions.

It might be well to bear in mind, fellow delegates, that there are upwards of ten million Negroes in this country. They buy food, clothing, shoes, automobiles, they buy every commodity that enters into the industrial life of America today. You have such institutions as have been referred to by President Green. These institutions are usually financed by foundations. Who finances the foundations? Such organizations as the International Harvester Company. We find that contributions to many of these organizations that are supposed to speak for the colored workers are made largely by these open shop corporations, and as a result it is to their advantage to grab upon every ounce of information they can get relating to prejudice toward the labor movement in an effort to keep the Negro workers out. It has not been so long ago since an article appeared in the paper by a Negro welfare worker, and his sole argument publicized in Negro newspapers was the fact that the American Federation of Labor had a color clause in many of the constitutions and where there are no color clauses they use other subterfuges whereby they will keep Negro workers out of the organization. His point was that therefore they should not become part of the American Federation of Labor, that their best friend was the man who had the money. Those organizations that are directing their efforts towards prejudice of the American Federation of Labor are in many instances financed by these great corporations. It is the position of the Brotherhood of Pullman Car Porters that while we are highly appreciative of the efforts put forth by the American Federation of Labor in the interests of the organization of Negro workers, insofar as the Sleeping Car Porters are concerned we are perfectly satisfied with what the American Federation of Labor has done for us, although in many instances we have not always agreed. Nevertheless, we are satisfied, I say, as far as the Sleeping Car Porters are concerned. But now since we are able to sit around the table for the first time in the history of America and write a national agreement concerning a large group of Negro workers we find in every mail that comes to our office appeals from all classes of Negro workers for organization. Therefore, we feel that the American Federation of Labor ought to make even more than a gesture of carrying out this educational campaign, making it known to these international unions that there must be something definite done about this matter in order that we might be able to go out in my own field among a large number of Negro workers who incidentally have not yet been educated in the trade union movement. They do not know anything about the value of buying trade union products. There is a large volume of Negro workers who by reason of their contacts with the trade union movement, would be able to buy more union-made products. It is our intention to go out in the field and spread the gospel of organized labor, and we want a real honest-to-goodness program for the American Federation of Labor to the end that we may be able to overcome all these arguments that have been put up against us, largely financed by those interested in the exploitation of labor in general.

President Green: The Chair recognizes Delegate Harrison:

Delegate Harrison, *Railway Clerks*: Mr. Chairman, I dislike very much to take up the time of the convention at this late hour to discuss this question, but Delegate Randolph's charge against the Executive Council compels me to make a statement of fact in that connection. The report which Delegate Randolph criticized was drafted by myself at the request of the Executive Council. The report was drafted in the manner that it was for the reason that the report that was submitted by four members of the committee of five appointed by President Green went beyond the duty imposed upon that committee by the San Francisco convention. If you will read that report closely you will find that it does not only deal with the Negro question, but it deals with all races.

Furthermore, there was a minority report submitted by one member of that committee, and in order not to submit the two conflicting reports to the convention, I endeavored to write a report for the Executive Council that was in keeping with the instructions imposed upon that committee by the San Francisco convention.

Now the report of the Council very clearly states that there are some affiliated national and international unions which deny full membership to Negro workers. There are some affiliated national and international unions which have some restrictions upon the membership privileges of the Negro workers, and in those instances where the Negro is entirely excluded from membership in the affiliated national and international unions, the American

Federation of Labor has arranged for membership for those workers in Federal Labor unions. In the report we point out the necessity of solidarity among all workers, regardless of color, and we say that we believe that is a problem which will have to be corrected through education. We therefore call upon the affiliated national and international unions and the American Federation of Labor to carry on a continuous campaign of education to the end of that all workers will be admitted to all the affiliated organizations composing this American Federation of Labor.

I have always understood that under the charters and the constitution of the American Federation of Labor all affiliated unions had complete autonomy to determine the qualifications of membership, and that being true, there is only one way to solve this problem, and that is through education. So much for that. I say that because the charge made by Delegate Randolph has no basis in fact.

I want to deal with the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks for a moment, the organization of which I have the honor to be President. I regret that Delegate Randolph would take the liberty to discuss the policies of my organization in this convention because he knows nothing of those policies. He is entirely uninformed about those policies and about their application to the particular question he endeavored to present to this convention. In the railway industry we do not have a closed shop. Our organizations are entirely voluntary. In negotiating our contracts with railway managements, we make no reference whatever to the color of any employee. The contract covers each and every employee, regardless of color, who may be in the service of that particular railway. Under those contracts we have seniority rules and rosters are posted carrying the seniority of the various employees in any given district. Under the contracts of my own particular organization, we have those provisions. We have some few Negro workers in our class of service. In those instances where we do have Negro workers they appear on the same seniority roster along with the white workers and they enjoy their seniority rights just the same as do the white workers.

In the event a Negro worker may have a grievance because the contract is not observed by the management officials our committees undertake to adjust those grievances in exactly the same fashion as they do for the white employees covered by that contract, and in the event that we are unable to adjust those grievances with the management officials, we progress them to the National Adjustment Board in Chicago, established under the provisions of the Railway Labor Act, and we secure decisions in exactly the same manner as we do for the white employees.

Now we do not admit Negroes to our Brotherhood, so in order to take care of that problem, because we must give them the same service we give to the white employees, we organized the Negroes into Federal Labor Unions. Federal Labor unions pay per capita tax to our committee on each railroad as do our local unions and their representatives sit with the representatives of our local unions in determining the demands that will be made upon railway management, and the settlement that will be made in respect to matters affecting their wages and working conditions. Summed up in a nutshell, the Negro worker under the Brotherhood I represent has complete economic equality. He does not have social equality to the extent that we do not admit him to our Brotherhood. I think that policy is wrong and we ought to admit him to full membership, but it is a problem of education and one that must be handled in that way. We have had this problem up in the conventions of our International organization since 1922, endeavoring to remove the restrictions. I hope that some day we shall persuade our people to grant full membership to the Negro workers, but it will have to be carried on in that way.

I have tried to give you the facts without any prejudice whatever, because I believe every worker ought to be organized, they all should be in the same organization, but it is a matter that will have to worked out and I don't want this convention to pass a resolution or a motion that will say that my International Union will be expelled if we do not amend our constitution, because then you are discussing with me a principle as to whether or not the organization I represent shall have the same privilege of enjoying its autonomy as do the other affiliated national and international organizations.

Under Delegate Randolph's organization these railway labor unions give to Delegate Randolph and his Sleeping Car Porters the freedom they enjoy today through the Railway Labor Act. We are glad to see them organized and we are

glad to cooperate with them. I believe the report of the Council meets the situation fairly and it ought to be approved by this convention.

Delegate Randolph: A point of correction. In the first place I want to say we are not directing any special criticism against the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks. We set forth the facts as they are. There are other unions in the Federation that are guilty of the same sin of excluding Negro workers.

President Green was a little in error when he said that only five unions of the 105 affiliated national and international unions excluded Negro workers. There are twenty unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor who exclude Negro workers. The Machinists, the Plumbers, the Electricians and others that I could name here exclude them.

Relative to the observation made by the delegate over here, giving the impression that Federal unions could not bring grievances to the National Board of Adjustment, I want to confirm that statement I made, and you can go to the National Board of Adjustment itself and it will tell you that no railway organization which is not national in structure can raise a grievance to that Board. Federal local unions are national organizations, therefore, Federal local unions of Negroes are absolutely helpless in raising grievances before the Board of Adjustment.

On the matter of railroad organizations giving the Sleeping Car Porters their salvation under the law, I want to correct Brother Harrison in that statement. When the Railway Labor Act, amended by the 73rd Congress was to be enacted, when the representatives of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters got down to Washington we found that every group of railroad workers in the railway industry was written into the act in black and white, designated in black and white, except the Sleeping Car Porters. I don't know who was responsible for that. The railway workers, he claims, helped to bring that Act into existence. We appeared before the Senate Committee on Foreign and Interstate Commerce and the House Committee and introduced an amendment to the Bill which was already printed, so that the Sleeping Car Porters should be included in the law. That is a very important correction that I want to make, because it leaves the impression with the delegates here that the railroad unions put the Sleeping Car Porters on their feet as a result of that law. If we had been excluded we would not have had any rights under the law. We could not appeal to the National Board of Adjustment had we not gone down there and had the Sleeping Car Porters not put that in there ourselves. The whole discussion of the Federal unions is absolutely unsound. It does not meet the issue at all and we had just as well recognize that fact.

I appreciate the observation of Delegate Harrison in stating that he hopes the time will come when the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks will eliminate the color clause, but we want it known right now, Mr. Chairman, that the Negro workers in the Federal unions have absolutely no remedy by way of dealing with management through the Federal labor unions. Secondly, it is in error to say that the Negroes are economically equal with other members of national organizations, when they have not the right to become members of that organization. That is a very peculiar plan of economic equality.

Delegate Tracy, *Electricians*: The delegate has just made a statement that I want to correct. He said that the Electrical Workers barred the Negroes by law from membership in their organization. There is nothing in the law of the International Union of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers that bars Negroes, and such false statements as are made relative to our law here are not doing his cause any good. We also have Negro members in our organization.

President Green: The question has been called for. The question recurs on the substitute for the committee's report offered by delegate Randolph.

*The motion to adopt the substitute was lost.*

*The motion to adopt the committee's report was carried.*

*Proceedings of the 55th annual convention of the American Confederation of Labor, 1935, pp. 806-19, 827-29.*

## 39. 1936 CONVENTION

## Discrimination Against Negro Worker

Resolution 79--By Delegate A. Philip Randolph, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

WHEREAS, Following the San Francisco Convention of 1934, in which Resolution No. 141, demanding the expulsion from the A.F. of L. any national or international union whose constitution or ritual contained clauses against the membership of workers because of race or color, a committee of five trade union workers, consisting of John E. Rooney, Operative Plasterers and Cement Finishers; John Brophy, United Mine Workers of America; John W. Garvey, International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers' Union; Jerry L. Hanks, the Journeyman Barbers International Union; and T. C. Carroll, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Ways Employes, was appointed by President Green, and conducted an investigation into discriminations in the trade unions against Negro workers, for two days in the A.F. of L. Building in Washington, D.C; and

WHEREAS, The report of the committee appointed by President Green never was formally presented to the Convention, as the adopted resolution No. 141 of the San Francisco Convention demanded, but on the contrary, a statement was prepared and submitted to the Atlantic City Convention by George M. Harrison, President of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, who was appointed by President Green to deal with the report of the aforementioned committee, which statement minimized the question of discriminations against Negro workers, but stated in part, as follows: . . . We are of the opinion that since each affiliated national and international union has complete autonomy that the welfare of the Negro worker will be best served by a campaign of education of white workers to bring them the necessity of solidarity in the ranks of the workers and the voluntary elimination of all restrictions against full rights of membership to the Negro. The American Federation of Labor has consistently advocated the organization of all workers and we reaffirm that policy. The economic welfare of the workers can best be served by complete unity of purpose and action. We therefore recommended that all national and international unions and the American Federation of Labor conduct a continuous campaign of education to bring to the white workers the necessity for greater unity of the workers in the labor movement to the end that all discrimination against Negroes will be removed," the said statement being accepted and adopted by the convention; and

WHEREAS, Discriminations against Negro workers by trade unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. are still rife and flagrant in utter nullification of the many high-sounding declarations by numerous conventions of the A.F. of L. for equality of race and color prejudice, and in violation of the constitution of the A.F. of L., said discriminations consisting not only of color clauses in constitutions and rituals of national and international unions, but in many other subtle and varied ways, both against Negro workers going into the unions, and devious machinations to deny them jobs after they are in the unions and are paying their dues and taxes; and

WHEREAS, Negro workers have demonstrated that they possess the will and capacity to organize and fight, picket and strike along side their white brothers and sisters for union recognition and conditions, as seen among the needle trades, coal miners, longshoremen, and share-crop and tenant farmers, unions in which Negro workers are accorded equal rights and treatment; and

WHEREAS, So long as one black worker is denied trade union recognition, equality and protection and is victimized by capitalist exploiters, and is prevented from realizing security, no white worker is safe in the possession and exercise of his alleged freedom, and since working class solidarity, the only hope and salvation of the workers, is not possible of attainment so long as one worker is barred entrance into a union because of race or color, nationality, religion, political faith or sex; and

WHEREAS, In this period of crisis, when the employing class is seeking to crush and stamp out the trade union movement with fascist ferocity, and gives no thought or consideration to a worker because he accidentally may be a white man, a white woman or a white child, seeking only to coin the blood and sweat of all workers into dollars for profit, the A.F. of L. should cease to pussy-foot, evade and dodge the question of Negro rights in the trade unions and frankly face it in the interest not only of the Negro worker but of its own

moral, intellectual and spiritual growth and power and future; for no honest and sincere trade-union official or worker who has witnessed the dire ravages of this depression and noted the growing threat of the Big Business interests, to the right and interests of the workers, can, in good conscience and sound trade union ethics and principle, slam the door of the trade unions in the face of a worker merely because God made him black. No self-respecting Negro worker can accept the stigma of race inferiority which exclusion from trade unions attaches to him, and no truly fair-minded white worker or leader should expect or demand it. There being no more shameful and disgraceful blot upon the name of the A.F. of L. than this discrimination and jim-crow policy of certain unions in the A.F. of L., and the disposition of the A.F. of L., to permit it to continue; there be it

RESOLVED, That the Fifty-sixth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, assembled in Tampa, Florida, goes on record as condemning all forms of discrimination against Negro workers, and demands the elimination of the color bar from all constitutions and rituals of national and international unions, making it mandatory that if any union affiliated with the A.F. of L. with color clauses in their constitutions or rituals fail to eliminate the said clauses in their next conventions and report same to the Executive Council, that the said national or international, stands automatically expelled from the A. F. of L. and call upon the central and state bodies departments, national and international and federal unions to create an anti-race prejudice committee, to hold hearings on the extent and nature of discriminatory practices against Negro workers in their own unions and among the unions in their locality, and to agitate and educate the workers of the need and value of working class unity for defense and protection against capitalist oppression; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the A.F. of L. can, with as much constitutional justification, expel a union which violated its own, the A.F. of L. Constitution, by barring workers on account of race or color as it can justify constitutionally the expulsion of ten national unions because of alleged violation of democratic trade union procedure. . . .

The American Federation of Labor, has, from the beginning, energetically endeavored to overcome all forms of discrimination, and has vigorously opposed any distinction in citizenship and citizen rights because of race or color.

The discussion of this subject in our conventions, the influence of our National and International Unions have accomplished most practical results. The method which our trade union movement has applied has been that of education. We have led trade unionists to see the dangers to free institutions whenever discrimination was permitted to exist. Our American trade union movement at its beginning adopted a fundamental principle, that it would recognize all wage earners as being equal in all of their rights, regardless of racial origins or religious and political beliefs.

Your committee is opposed to any other methods than those of education, for prejudices cannot be eliminated by any other method. For this valid reason your committee recommends non-concurrence with the resolutions.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report of the committee.

Delegate Meyers, Technical and Research Employees' Union: I am obliged to rise in protest against the position of the Resolution Committee on this resolution. This is a continuance of the policy as expressed in the report on the Scottsboro case and is a shameful evasion of the problem that faces America and the task of welding thirteen million negroes in this country into the labor unions. We know that the negro is not given his rights as provided by the constitution. We know it by looking out on the streets of the city and seeing Jim Crow cars, and we also know that negro delegates are not staying in the same hotel where white delegates are staying, simply because in the south the negro is not accorded the rights of the white man.<sup>81</sup>

We have an opportunity to protest it. We have an opportunity to struggle for the further emancipation of the negro as well as of other minority groups, as a labor organization, and yet when the opportunity comes before us we evade it. I don't say "We," I say the Resolutions Committee, and I think we have got to be sharp about it. I have heard on this floor insulting remarks already under the breath, and it burns me up to think that we are going to allow intolerance against the negro workers. We heard the representative from the Alabama State Federation of Labor talking about justice. It is true that not only the negro workers are persecuted in Alabama, but even the white organizers. The head of the United Rubber Workers' Union was slugged

near Birmingham. These attacks are not centered upon the negroes. The attack upon Herndon will be referred to in a resolution that will come up soon.<sup>82</sup>

From the attitude of the Resolutions Committee, it certainly does not seem that the committee is using every effort to weld together the negro and white workers. These resolutions are simply stating things that are known to everybody, and while it might not be to the liking of some people with prejudices to be put on the same equality with negroes, we, as working people, in order to get thirteen million negroes into our union, in order to prevent their use by white bosses to knock down the wages of the white workers, have to take them in.

I can call to your attention the stockyards strike in Chicago fifteen years ago. Negroes were employed without knowing what they were to do to break that strike, and later on, when there was an attempt to build unions among the negroes and whites, conveniently enough, race riots broke out. They were not accidents, they were planned, and they were planned to divide the negroes and the whites, so that unions could not be built. Therefore, knowing the attitude of the white bosses, we have to take a firm or courageous stand, we have to go out of our way to get them to work with us.

Perhaps you have noted that there is a certain amount of apathy about speaking on some of these resolutions, and because they are discouraged, not by the chair but by the reports of the Resolutions Committee, they do not speak. Certainly they can lend a helping hand to negro workers. I say if you want to build this movement, if you want to preserve democracy, if you want to weld unity, you have to defeat this report and stand in favor of the resolution, as should have been done in the Scottsboro case.

Delegate Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters: Mr. Chairman and delegates to the convention, at the outset may I say that the Sleeping Car Porters' delegates do not claim that the American Federation of Labor has not done anything for the organization of the colored workers. We do not claim that the American Federation of Labor is not now doing something for the organization of the Negro workers. We do not claim that the American Federation of Labor is not attempting to bring about better relations between the negro workers and the organized labor movement. President Green has on various occasions appeared in public meetings under the auspices of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and addressed large gatherings, he has made helpful, able, and constructive talks that have had wide influence in bringing about better relations between the negro workers and the labor movement.

We do say, however, there has not been any systematic and coordinated effort for the purpose of eliminating discrimination in the trade union movement. In the Atlantic City convention a report was adopted in the interest of prosecuting a nation-wide campaign of education to eliminate discrimination in the trade unions. I do not know that anything has been done on that program. I have not heard of anything being done. When the question of discrimination in the trade unions comes up the question is always raised that it is an invasion of autonomy of the national and international unions. Autonomy is not something absolute, autonomy is relative. In other words, you have this doctrine of autonomy with respect to state rights, and yet there are limitations set upon states' rights. For instance, no state is permitted to ignore the income tax law. No state is permitted to set up a separate postal arrangement of its own. Therefore, despite the existence of the doctrine of autonomy, there is also a recognition of the limitations upon autonomy. If the American Federation of Labor can say to an international union that you cannot go out and organize workers without the scope of your jurisdiction by invading the field of another union, it seems to me that the American Federation of Labor ought to be able also to say to a national or international union that you cannot remain within the American Federation of Labor if you go out and proceed to organize a given group of workers and exclude from that organization workers that come within the scope of your jurisdiction. In other words, it seems that if the Federation can exclude an organization for invading a field of another union in organizing workers, it can also exclude a union for refusing to accept workers in a field over which it has jurisdiction.

As a matter of fact it is utterly impossible to have a unified movement if the organization of workers is based upon race or color. Now the exclusion of negroes from the trade unions involves two things. One is attaching a stigma, a stigma of inferiority to the negro workers. This is a condition which no self-respecting negro worker can accept. Second, the exclusion of negro workers from the trade unions involved also a loss of wages and a loss of jobs. I know

of numerous instances where negro workers have gone from job to job. They have asked for the right to work and the foreman has said, "Have you a union card?" The negro worker has answered, "No." Then the formen said, "Well, you cannot get work." The negro worker in turn has gone to the union and has said, "I want a union card, I want to join the organization," and the union has said "Have you got a job?" He answers, "No," and then the union says, "We cannot give you a union card."

Consequently, you can see the vicious circle in which the negro worker is thrown. If he hasn't got a job he cannot get a card in the union, and if he hasn't got a card in the union he cannot get a job. Therefore, this is a serious and fundamental and basic and vital question.

Now, when the workers exclude a group of workers from their own union on the basis of race and color, and the employer does not exclude their workers, it is a point of division, because the employers say to the negro workers, "You see, the white workers are opposed to you." This subject of discrimination of negro workers in the union is important for consideration in the Tampa convention, because here we are in the midst of the South. I have been told by a number of international presidents that they would oppose the color clause in their constitutiona and rituals, but that they could not do anything about it because of their southern membership. I have been told that there are vice presidents of international unions who failed of reelection because they dared to advocate the right of negroes to join their unions. Therefore, you can readily see the importance of discussing this question in a place where you have the whole element of southern prejudice before you.

The American labor movement will never be effective so long as there is not an effective labor movement in the south, and there will never be an effective labor movement in the South so long as the negro workers are not accepted by the unions upon a basis of equality. As a matter of fact, the white and black workers of the South cannot be organized separately as the fingers on my hand. They must be organized altogether, as the fingers on my hand when they are doubled up in the form of a fist, in order that they may be able to strike at the proper moment. If they are organized separately they will not understand each other, and if they do not understand each other they will fight each other, and if they fight each other they will hate each other and the employing class will profit from that condition.

What are the conditions of the white worker in the South? You have, for instance, convict labor. Right here in Tampa, I saw a number of white workers cleaning the streets, while a guard had a gun in his pocket working along with them. This is the condition of the white workers right here in the South. Then you know of the kidnapping and the flogging case here, the murder of Shoemaker and the flogging of Poulnot. There were also textile workers in Georgia who were put in concentration camps. White men were shot in Gastonia and Marion, North Carolina. The only privilege I can see in a worker being white is the privilege of looking down on the negro and of starving to death.

You have white workers who are share croppers, white workers and children who are being exploited in the factories. The white workers and the negro workers have more in common than the white workers and the white employers. The white share crop worker and the negro share crop worker have more in common than the white share crop worker and the white capitalist or the landlord. These are principles and truths that the white workers in the South will learn, and I can see evidences of an advancement of education among the white workers in the South along this line. I do not condemn the white workers in the South for their attitude toward the negro workers, because they have been the victims of prejudice, inculcated, fostered and engendered by the demagogues of the press, the church, and the state in the South. The various forces of capitalism have played their part in keeping the black and white workers apart, and so the white workers are not to blame. They are slowly seeing the light. As a matter of fact, it is illustrated as to what attitude the employers of the South have toward the white and black workers by a historical incident in slavery. One slave owner wanted to have something fixed on the top of his house, and there was a negro carpenter who was a slave and a white carpenter. It was a dangerous job, and it was possible that the man who went up there to fix that house would fall down and kill himself. So the slave owner sent the white carpenter up to do the job, and while some other demagogue, a politician, was standing by he asked the slave owner, "Why would you send a white man on top of that house to do a job when he might fall and kill himself, when you have a Negro slave there?" The white slave owner said, "Well, if a white worker goes up on

that house and happens to fall and kill himself, I don't lose anything, I can get another one, but if this Negro slave is sent up there and falls down and kills himself, I will get a thousand dollars."

Therefore, you see where there is a conflict of economic interests and race, the economic interests prevail. That shows you that the conflict in the South over this question has a definite economic basis.

Now, what is the condition of the Negro? The Negro in the South is the victim of the peonage-disfranchisement, Lily-white primaries, poll tax, tenant and share-crop farming, the entire jim-crow system, segregation, mob rule, lynch terror, low wages, long hours and intolerable working conditions and convict labor.

As a matter of fact, I have in my hand a report which was recently made by Dr. C. F. Duncan, of Jacksonville, a colored man, president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a negro insurance man and a negro journalist from Jacksonville, and Frank McAllister, a white man, of the Workers' Defense League. They went to McClenny, Fla., on the 15th day of this month, at 10:00 o'clock in the morning and made an investigation of negro peonage there. This is their report:

"We first interviewed a school teacher who informed us of the conditions of the schools. In her department there were 52 children in one room. A majority of the children come to school barefooted. Attendance falls off in the coldest months because the pupils do not have enough clothes to keep warm. She was prevailed upon to talk only through intervention of Dr. Duncan, who assured her that no harm would befall her but that it was her duty to speak freely. The houses (if you can call them that) in which these people live all are owned by Will Knabb, turpentine operator, and the workers live in constant fear of reprisals.

"Next we talked with several turpentine workers who talked freely but only after much persuasion. They stated categorically that all the negro people in this community were held in slavery. None is allowed to leave the place. The owner has two stool-pigeons who keep him informed of everything that goes on in the quarters. These informers even slip under the shackles at night and listen in on the conversation to see if they may detect some hint of dissatisfaction which might indicate that someone was harboring thoughts of "escape." One of these informers is named Cobb. After almost two hours in the quarters, Cobb detected our party and immediately ran to the clerk of the commissary to notify him that someone was prying around.

"The turpentine workers are forced to toil from daylight until they can no longer see at night. For their labor they receive pay ranging from 60 cents per day to \$1.00. A very few receive as much as \$1.25 a day. They are forced to purchase their supplies at the commissary owned by Knabb. Prices at this commissary are almost double regular retail prices. For example, white bacon, which can be bought in Tampa stores for 15 cents per pound, cost 25 cents per pound in Knabb's commissary. Six pounds of plain flour cost 40 cents in the commissary and the same grade can be bought for 24 cents at the retail stores. When the wages of the turpentine workers are translated into purchasing power it is easy to see that many of them are working for 25 cents per day. One man spent \$2.00 outside the commissary a little while back and was told that his pay of \$10.00 would be held up until he purchased all his goods at the commissary.

"Any desire on the part of the inmates to escape is effectively thwarted by the realization of possible consequences. Men may suffer beatings, their very lives may be threatened if they attempt to leave. By a system of camps which surround the community they are able to head off any fleeing slave.

"As soon as we had secured this information, which we considered adequate, we decided it would be safer to leave. The informer had notified the commissary of our presence and we could see a small cluster of white men gathering. Wisdom seemed to dictate departure and so we left after about two hours in the quarters."

"Here is an evidence of exploitation of the negro workers. Why? Because there is no labor organization in the South that has the strength and power to prevent the exploitation of negro and white workers."

I appeal to this convention, and especially to President Green, that some representation be made to Governor Scholtz of Florida, the Sheriff of Baker County, the United States Attorney General for an investigation of peonage in



Florida and a general Federal investigation by the Congress. Here is a direct violation of the constitution, because here is a case where men are being held in involuntary servitude. I also appeal to President Green to make representations to the United States Attorney and also proceed in getting a Federal investigation of this condition, because it is typical throughout the state of Florida, and unless someone might say that I don't know enough about Florida to talk about this, I want to say to you that I was born in Crescent City, Florida. My mother and father were born in Monticello, Florida. My fathers' father was born in Virginia, and his forbears run back to slaves who were owned by John Randolph one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Therefore, I am as American as any white American born in America. Therefore, there is no question of some interloper raising this question.

The question of the economic opportunity for the black worker in the South is bound up with the question of economic opportunity for the white worker in the South. So long as the black worker remains a slave, white workers in the South will never be free. So we appeal to the white workers in the South, and I have faith in the ultimate sense of Justice toward negro workers on the part of the white workers in the South. I believe the white workers of the old South will eventually see the light, and when they do they will join hands with the black workers and they will fight together against a common foe.

It has been said it cannot be done, but it is being done in Arkansas, where you have the black and white workers in the same tenant farmers' union. Right here in Tampa, in the Longshoremen's Union there are white men alongside black men fighting for the same thing. Therefore, there is no fundamental opposition, no fundamental difference between the white and the black workers. They have a common interest in getting more wages and better conditions, and they have a common interest in opposing their exploiters. But when some demagogue comes around and tells the white worker he is better than the black worker, and then he goes around and tells the black worker that the white worker is trying to take advantage of him, then hate and hostility begin to flare up. The only remedy for that is the organization of the black worker and the white worker in the South in the same union.

I hope that the holding of this convention here in Tampa will help bring that about. I was quite opposed to the holding of the convention in Tampa, because I believe whenever a convention is held by the American Federation of Labor, provision ought to be made that negro delegates will receive the same accommodations as all other delegates to the convention. That condition, of course, does not exist in Tampa. In the future I think that should be taken into consideration, and whenever an effort is being made to hold a convention the A.F. of L. should refuse to hold it in a city where equal accommodations are not afforded.

However, I hope that the holding of the convention here will result in the building up of sentiment for the organization of the negro and white workers together. I believe that will serve as one of the fundamental solutions of the problem of the workers of America. I believe the time will come when the working class people of the South will be the most militant of the working class people of America, especially when these two groups here are united and have all in common and nothing in opposition.

Secretary Frey: Mr. Chairman, I believe every delegate in the hall has the highest regard for the splendid assistance which the delegate who has just spoken has endeavored to give to his own race in this country. For one, I admire him and he knows it, but I want to call your attention to the fact that the delegate has not addressed himself either to his resolution or to the committee's report, and the report is predicated upon the resolution which was introduced. The resolution calls for the expulsion of any national or international union which does not amend its charter to conform to the delegate's opinion of what should be the rule relative to admission of negro workers. The resolution goes further, and it says that the failure of an international union to amend its charter is equivalent to the action of international unions in setting up a dual organization to the American Federation of Labor, and therefore, the Executive Council is equally justified in expelling them. May I read the resolve, so that there can be no doubt?

"Further resolved that the American Federation of Labor can, with as much constitutional justification, expel a union which violated its own, the A.F. of L. constitution, by barring workers on account of race or color as it can justify

constitutionally the expulsion of ten national unions, because of alleged violation of democratic trade union procedure."

Now I know of no one who has done as much to eliminate racial prejudice in this country as did the American Federation of Labor, and I want to say in the kindest spirit possible that because of my interest in the question I am at times almost convinced that one of the most serious obstacles to the more rapid elimination of that racial prejudice is the attitude assumed by some leaders of the colored race.

Now, let us get a few facts which are more important than logic or eloquence or appeal. The outstanding delegate in this convention, so far as organizing members of his race is concerned, with the assistance of the American Federation of Labor, brought a national union of Pullman porters into existence. Their delegates are seated here. They have had the support of every central labor union in the country. May I call your attention to the fact that all of the members of that union belong to the same race as the delegate who has just addressed you. Now, circumstances in our country cannot be the same for everyone, and we know that not only are there oppressed and exploited negroes in the south, but there are also exploited and oppressed white workers in the south.

But there are opportunities, and I want to give you a contract. I did not have the educational advantages of the delegate. I went to work when I was nine years old. I never had an opportunity of receiving the education and the culture that we acquire in our great universities. While the delegate was having his mind trained, while he was absorbing the culture, the highest that we have in Harvard University, I was organizing negro moulders into the Moulders' Union in the deep south.

Yes, there are prejudices. The American trade union movement is not responsible for that, but they exist, they are deep-rooted, and I believe for one that the only way to eliminate them is through education and not through compulsion, as recommended in the resolution.

We are here in the South. On Sunday we saw the negroes going to the church of their own denomination. We saw the whites going to the church of the same denomination which they have for themselves. Does anyone believe that with a situation developed over several generations which leads Christians themselves to divide themselves into churches, so that members of each race go to their own church, although they are both of the same denomination, it is possible for our trade unions, by expelling national organizations, to more rapidly carry on the work of wiping out the unjust discrimination which exists?

The committee has said plainly in easily understood language that the committee believes it is only by applying educational methods that this prejudice can be eliminated, and if I understand the trade union movement that is the position this trade union movement will take on this continued introduction of resolutions and continued speeches doing more to stir up racial feelings than anything else. We are here to be of service, and the only way to eliminate prejudice is to use the strength of this Federation to apply educational methods. To advocate compulsion weakens instead of strengthens the effort that is necessary to wipe out the unjustified and unfortunate prejudice which does exist.

The report of the committee was adopted.

*Proceedings of the 56th annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1936, pp. 234-36, 631-35, 657-64.*



PART V  
THE LEFT

## THE LEFT

The exclusion of black workers from right-wing unions within the labor movement was opposed by those on the left. Indeed, even though the "Negro Problem" stirred considerable antagonism among left-wing labor organizations, the conflict centered on the best means for achieving the integration of blacks into mainstream unionism.

The socialists saw communism as a threat to their own influence, to be sure, but also to their view of the good society. Communists, with their talk of revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat, laid too much emphasis on destruction of the capitalistic system rather than constructive change, the socialists contended. Furthermore, they showed no regard for such cherished values as freedom of thought among the people they hoped to lead, and the communists' rise to power would only mean replacing one dictator with another. The communists, on the other hand viewed the socialists as all talk and no action. They charged the socialists with underestimating the power and determination of the capitalists to maintain themselves in power, and were convinced that violence would probably be necessary for the workers to gain control of the means of production.

Because the Communist Party had a stronger philosophical commitment to social activism and articulated a more unified ideological strategy than the socialists, their influence in the labor movement was much more visible. Numerous labor organizations were supported by the Communist Party. One of them, the Trade Union Educational League, was founded in November, 1920, by William Z. Foster to unite communists, non-communist radicals, and moderates within the AFL and the railroad brotherhoods in an effort to organize Negro workers into established unions. The T.U.E.L. achieved few concrete results among blacks, however, and, in 1929, the Trade Union Unity League was organized to revitalize and continue this work. With Foster serving as secretary, the T.U.U.L. aimed to gather the unorganized into industrial reformist unions of the AFL, and to bring Negroes into the labor movement through left-wing unions which accepted all workers.

The CP helped finance other activities among black workers as well. For example, it supported two black communists, Levett Fort-Whiteman and H. W. Phillips, who organized the American Negro Labor Congress. It met in October, 1925, and declared its intention to unionize black workers and to abolish racial discrimination in the union movement. Even though the Congress received notorious publicity in the press, it achieved little else. Consequently, a broad coalition of organizations interested in the problems of black workers remained a serious need when the National Negro Congress was organized in 1936. The NNC certainly qualified to fill that role, for representatives from 585 organizations heard A. Philip Randolph inaugurate the latest movement to organize blacks into industrial unions. The charge that it was a front for the CP, which helped finance the organization, hampered the NNC's efforts. Nevertheless, it continued to function until 1947, even though fragmented by internal schisms.

The communists' cause célèbre of the era, however, was the case of Angelo Herndon. On July 11, 1932, the young black communist organizer was arrested in Atlanta, Georgia, while leading relief demonstrations of the black and white unemployed. Herndon was convicted under an archaic law related to the incitement of slave insurrections, and sentenced to serve from eighteen to twenty years in prison. After a five-year struggle, the Supreme Court reversed Herndon's conviction by a five to four decision.

Part V documents these and other developments in the left-wing struggle to organize black workers.

## THE SOCIALISTS

## 1. EUGENE V. DEBS TO THE EDITORS OF THE MESSENGER, APRIL 9, 1923

A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen  
Editors of THE MESSENGER  
New York, N.Y.

My Dear Comrades:

During my absence from here while filling a series of speaking engagements a letter was received from you, as I am advised, and forwarded along with some other mail which duly reached me, but the letter from you seems to have gone astray in the mails. At least it did not come to me and I am unable to trace it, and this must be my apology for your not hearing from me. In your letter there was a request, as I am informed, for an article for THE MESSENGER, which I should have been glad to prepare and send if time had permitted the preparation of an article worthy of your columns. But at present, on account of many demands upon my time, there is little chance to do any writing, gladly as I would respond to your request for an article for THE MESSENGER. Although not yet entirely recovered, I have undertaken a rather strenuous speaking program, and in connection with this there are so many demands upon my time, and so many people to see at every point I visit, that there is barely time to meet the most pressing demands for attention.

I take pleasure in enclosing a brief contribution expressive of my sympathy and good will which you have always had in the splendid efforts you have been putting forth to awaken your race, and to set the feet of our Colored comrades and fellow workers in the path to emancipation.

All my active life I have been in especial sympathy with the Negro and with every intelligent effort put forth in his behalf. I know how he has been outraged in "free America" from the very hour he was stolen from his home, landed here like an animal, and sold into slavery from the auction block, and every time I meet a colored man face to face, even in prison, I blush with a sense of guilt that prompts me to apologize to him for the crime perpetrated upon his race by mine. Many years ago in traveling through the Southern States I urged and entreated labor unions to open their doors to the Negro and to admit him to fellowship upon equal terms with themselves, but in vain, and many an experience I had in that section to convince me of the deep-seated and implacable hatred and prejudice that prevailed against the Negro, and the impossibility of his securing justice in such a poisoned atmosphere and under such barbarous conditions. But more recently there has been some slight change for the better, due mainly to the pressure of economic conditions and to the growing conviction among Negroes that they themselves will have to take the initiative in whatever is undertaken to lift them out of their ignorance and slavery and out of the white man's brutal domination.

Permit me to congratulate you upon the growing excellence of THE MESSENGER. You have a series of articles and a variety of matter in the current issue that is eminently to your credit and the credit of your race. You are kind enough to write of me in a very flattering way, and coming from no other source would such an estimate, all too generous, touch me more deeply or afford me greater satisfaction. You do me the honor to place me in nomination for president, and coming from my Negro comrades this is a recognition of special value to me, but I wish no nomination for any office and I aspire to no higher honor than to stand side by side with you in the daily struggle, fighting the battles of the workers, black and white and all other colors, for industrial freedom and a better day for all humanity.

You are doing a splendid work in the education of your race and in the quickening of the consciousness of their class interests, in common with the interests of all other workers, and I heartily wish you increasing success and the realization of your highest aims and your noblest aspirations.

Thanking you again and again for your kindness and devotion so often and so loyally made manifest, I am always

Your loving comrade,

EUGENE V. DEBS

*The Messenger*, 5 (May, 1923): 714.

## 2. THE MESSENGER AND ITS MISSION

By Eugene V. Debs

It is more than gratifying to me in looking over the current MESSENGER to note the high excellence of its contents as a literary periodical and as a propaganda publication. It is edited with marked ability and it contains a variety of matter that would do credit to any magazine in the land.

All my life I have been especially interested in the problem of the Negro race, and I have always had full sympathy with every effort put forth to encourage our colored fellow-workers to join the Socialist movement and to make common cause with all other workers in the international struggle for the overthrow of capitalist despotism and the emancipation of all races from the oppressive and degrading yoke of wage slavery.

Due to the ignorance, prejudice, and unreasoning hatred of the white race in relation to the Negro, the latter has fared cruelly indeed and he has had but little encouragement from the "superior" race to improve his economic intellectual and moral condition, but on the contrary, almost everything has been done to discourage every tendency on the part of the Negro toward self-improvement and to keep him in abject servitude beneath the iron heel of his exploiting master.

But our black brother is beginning to awaken from his lethargy in spite of all the deadening influences that surround him; he has had his experience in the war and especially since the war, and he is coming to realize that his place is in the Socialist movement along with the white worker and the worker of every other race, creed and color, and THE MESSENGER is doing its full share to spread the light in dark places and to arouse the Negro masses to the necessity of taking their place and doing their part in the great struggle that is to emancipate the workers of all races and all nations from the insufferable curse of industrial slavery and social degradation.

May Day is now dawning and its spirit prompts me to hail THE MESSENGER as a herald of light and freedom.

On May Day the workers of the world celebrate the beginning of their international solidarity and register the high resolve to clasp hands all around the globe and to move forward in one solid phalanx toward the sunrise and the better day.

On that day we drink deeply at the fountain of proletarian inspiration; we know no nationality to the exclusion of any other, nor any creed, or any color, but we do know that we are all workers, that we are conscious of our interests and our power as a class, and we propose to develop and make use of that power in breaking our fetters and in rising from servitude to the mastery of the world.

*The Messenger*, 5 (May, 1923): 716.

## 3. A UNITED NEGRO TRADES

The problem of the Negro worker are increasing, not diminishing. In and out of the labor movement, the element of race twists, contorts, and distorts the Negro workers' relationships to white worker and employer alike. So

distressingly menacing is the Negro-white-worker-equation today that it is becoming increasingly imperative that some comprehensive work of education and organization be instituted with a view to bringing about a greater measure of mutual understanding and cooperation where now exist bitterness, distrust, hatred and suspicion on the part of both races. While out of the unions, Negroes complain against the bars erected by certain unions against their joining. After they join the unions, they still complain about race prejudice within the unions. Still there is no machinery which can be set in motion either to get the Negroes in the unions that are out or to see that those who are in get justice both from the point of view of getting jobs in their trade and of being elected officials in their unions. If the Negro workers are to prepare themselves for the more serious business of workers' control of industry, which the signs of the times indicate is gradually approaching, they must receive the rigid discipline of self-government which only the union activities afford. Thus to the end of creating and stimulating in the Negro worker a larger, more active and substantial interest in the principles, policies, and tactics of the Labor Movement in general; and of generating a greater concern in the Negro union member in the practical work and struggles of his union, an organization known as the United Negro Trades should be formed.

Especially is such a piece of machinery in the Labor Movement necessary during the tremendous exodus of Negro workers, north, east and west. Only a very few unions are doing anything to organize the Negro workers in their trades. Still the Negro workers are pouring into the various industries daily, weekly, and monthly by the hundreds and thousands. Without the work of such an organization, race riots are bound to flare up, especially when an industrial depression comes which creates a sullen army of white and black unemployed competing for the same jobs. Such an organization should conduct widespread propaganda among white and Negro workers, point out that the employers are robbing both without regard to race; that race prejudice is an injury to the worker and a benefit to the bosses. It should also issue pamphlets, booklets and manifestos on the vital relations between the black and white workers on local, national and international problems. It should encourage, advocate and foster the formation of independent Negro unions only when the white unions deny Negro workers a union card. In short, the United Negro Trades should be to the Negro worker what the United Hebrew Trades and the Italian Chamber of Labor are to the Jewish and Italian workers, respectively. It should seek the affiliation of Negro workers in all unions, and supply the necessary intelligent leadership for their guidance and protection, education and organization.

*The Messenger*, 5 (July, 1923): 757.

#### 4. THE MENACE OF NEGRO COMMUNISTS

Negro Communists are a menace. They are a menace to the workers, themselves and the race. Why? Because they are disruptionists, seeking with irrational and romantic zeal to break down the morale, to confuse the aims and ideals of the New Negro Liberation Movement. So utterly senseless, unsound, unscientific, dangerous and ridiculous are their policies and tactics that we are driven to conclude that they are either lunatics or agents provocateurs, stool pigeons of the United States Department of Justice. Their preachments and antics about r-r-r-e-volution, the Third Internationale, the dictatorship of the proletariat, are so inane and childish that they would be amusing were they not so tragically disastrous to the aggressive, independent and rationally radical manhood efforts of the Negro. Just as spies have been planted amongst the white Communists, so spies will be, if they have not already been, planted among the Negro Communists, whose policy is to preach doctrines of extremism. This is calculated to attract the persecution of the Department of Justice to all Negro movements working for race and economic justice. On the grounds that they are petty *bourgeois*, Negro Communists seek to wreck all constructive, progressive, non-Communist programs. Thus the Negro



Communists are a menace whether they are paid tools of W. J. Burns or are mere ignorant, credulous fanatics, believing that they are serving a holy cause. For Communism can be of no earthly benefit to either white or Negro workers in America. It is even being replaced in the interest of the Russian worker in obedience to the material exigencies of the situation by State Capitalism by Lenin and Trotsky, after recognizing its impracticability at the present stage of economic development of Russia. How foolish, then, is it to advocate Communism to the Negro workers before they have even grasped the fundamentals and necessity of simple trade and industrial unionism! Nor are we impressed with the sincerity of the Negro Communists, for their statements have revealed that they are utterly devoid of any respect for fact, truth, or honesty.<sup>84</sup>

*The Messenger*, 5 (August, 1923): 784.

#### 5. MEDDLING IN THE PORTERS UNION

About the most contemptible piece of work Communists have been guilty of is their attempt to interfere with the Brotherhood of Pullman Porters. It is an old game which they have played with unions of white workers but their attempt to sow dissension among Negro workers at a crisis in the career of the union is criminal. Distribution of a circular at the meeting of the Porters last week denouncing the leaders who have spent years in building up the union is the work of fools.

Randolph, Crosswaith and other leaders of the Pullman Porters need no defense. Their devotion to the cause of the Porters is a record of years. It is the prospect of a group who looted the treasures of the Furriers and the Cloakmakers and almost wrecked these unions that gives us concern. The Communist grafters have waited for a crucial moment when the Porters have reached a crisis in their long efforts to establish themselves as a union in the railway service to inject themselves into the affairs of the union.

The document itself is stupid. It calls attention to the isolation of the railroad brotherhoods and their separatist policies and then goes on to denounce the "craft isolation" of the "present leadership of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters." This is a compound of malice and stupidity. If the brotherhoods are separatist in outlook how is it possible for the Porters to organize except as Porters? The only alternative would be for the Porters to wait till the brotherhoods consolidate and take in Porters and that would be to wait till the present generation of Porters and their grandchildren are dead.

Of course, the Communists want "a militant, class conscious leadership." Yes, the kind that led the Furriers and Cloakworkers to ruin, the kind provided by the Communists themselves. When the Porters want to disband they will accept the leadership of these grafters and they will be sure that the wreckage will be as complete as the Pullman Company may wish.

*The New Leader*, June 16, 1928.

#### 6. COMMUNISM AND THE NEGRO I

By Frank R. Crosswaith

In a recent issue of "The Masses" Michael Gold, its editor, in true Communist fashion stretched himself beyond his natural limits as a student of social forces when he made out a case for the Negro and Communism. Mr. Gold's article was relayed in parts to the Negro press and many of our editors gave prominent space to it.

Like all known Communist propagandists in the United States, Mr. Gold was most attractive when recounting the many and varied evils attendant upon Negro life in America. Nor could he resist the temptation to indulge in the delightful Communist pastime of "truth betrayal" especially when discussing the Socialist Party. Editor Gold climbed to dizzy heights of ecstasy because a few Southern textile workers attended a convention in Paterson, N.J. at which was spoken "the language of social revolution." The presence of these tall, raw-boned 100 per cent Americans whom Brother Gold claims five years ago were Ku Kluxers, at a convention seating Negro delegates so dazzled the editor's eyes that he saw "Southern labor awakened" and vouchsafed the prophecy that "American capitalists would no longer be able to use Southern workers in the role of Cossacks as the Czar of Russia used to do." Gastonia, N.C. had suddenly become "a modern Bunker Hill" and Communism "has at last struck its roots in American history." "The Communist Party had succeeded where before Socialists had failed" according to Brother Gold. The historical continuity of the picture was somewhat broken when the editor failed to place on Bunker Hill, dead or alive, the celebrated Crispus Attucks, altho Negro Tolstoys, Gorkys and Walt Whitmans were there.<sup>85</sup>

Following this fine piece of fictional writing by Gold, the Negro press is now being treated to other fantastic stories about the rapid growth of Communism among Negroes; and apparently our press is relishing this Communist cooked porridge. According to these latest tales thousands of Negroes have made the remarkable discovery that Communism is the panacea for all our racial and social ills. Is it? We shall see.

Mine is not the desire to deny to Communists their right to propagandize the Negro masses even though it is a cardinal tenet of Communist creed to deny to all who differ from them the right to a differing opinion. Nor would I question the right of any worker to accept the Communist faith. On the contrary, I would like to see the Negro study the Communist movement and conduct, for that would be the safest guarantee that he would reject Communism and all that goes with it, as readily, if not more so, than white workers have done.

Communism represents the most erratic, undemocratic and impractical of all the movements of social protest extant in the world today. Communism is not radicalism, it is erraticism. Communism is based upon the shifting psychological notions of a comparatively few strong-willed social revolutionists, so-called, who succeeded in securing power at a time and in a land when any disciplined group possessing courage and organization could have seized power. Communism has brought into the arena of constructive social engineering much chaos and thereby greatly retarded our progress toward social and economic justice, and this is true in spite of the fact that the Russian experiment has made in a way an invaluable contribution as a negative index in the direction toward affecting fundamental changes in our social and economic life.

Communism lacks a realistic approach to the problems developing out of Capitalism. Insofar as the Communists have evidenced any constructive program of a broad social and economic nature it has been only on those occasions when the pressure of circumstances forced them to discard theoretical Communism for the realism of modern Socialism. Communism is a frank denial of many of the most cherished ideals for which practical idealists of every race have struggled. For the old dogma of the divine right of kings Communists would substitute the divine right of a dictator; only, so they say, their dictatorship would dictate in the interest of the proletariat whether or not the proletariat desires it.

Communists believe in "the theory of misery" which teaches that the deeper down you press men in the social and economic mire the sooner will they revolt. This theory stands today rejected alike by social scientists and students of any merit. The facts of life rather support the view that "social improvement breeds social discontent" and that "he who has least wants least." Communists believe that democracy is a bourgeois institution which along with capitalism must be destroyed root and branch. On the other hand, more rational people hold that the ideals of genuine democracy have not yet been realized but that many of the instruments for the complete realization of democracy have already been developed and passed down to us by preceding generations who won them in the struggle against divinely ordained kings and others.

Communists believe that "truth," "honor," "morality," are all bourgeois notions with which no proletariat should hobnob. Informed people, however, recognize that out of the welter of human experience certain codes governing conduct were evolved and that as we grow in mental stature and sense more and more our social responsibilities some acquired habits, customs and ideologies will go by the board because a newer environment has made them obsolete, while others will be kept because of their adaptability and merit.

Communists believe in the Gospel according to Marx and Lenin, while people less superstitious prefer to apply to the accumulated experiences of mankind and to the economic and social institutions born of these experiences, the light of newly discovered truths in order intelligently to attack the problems of the present and chart our course toward the future.

NOTE.

Because I believe that the Communist movement represents to the Negro in particular and the working class generally a menace, the subject will be continued in the next issue with the hope that readers will be able the more intelligently to separate the communist menace from the constructive, social, political and economic movements of our time. - The Editor.

Negro Labor News Service, March 15, 1930. A copy of the original release in the possession of the editors.

## 7. COMMUNISM AND THE NEGRO II

By Frank R. Crosswaith

The present campaign in Russia against the church is additional proof that there is neither tact nor restraint in Communism's attempt to bridge the chasm between Capitalism and Socialism. History shows that the church has been, and still is, used by the dominant classes to serve their economic interest. In Russia especially, the church stood for all the evils of Czarism, even as the church generally stood with the slave regime here in the United States.

Like all other human institutions the church grew out of the experiences, hopes and fears of man. Because of the very nature and origin of the church, it was bound, in time, to be utilized by the class in power for perpetuating class domination. Nevertheless, when Communists decide to uproot the church and impose their brand of religion as superior, they deliberately destroy religious freedom or liberty.

Instead of tyrannizing and destroying the church as the Communists have set out to do, we Socialists believe it far more desirable and reasonable to change the functions of the church--to use it as a rallying point from which to attack and destroy social and economic injustice, to preach against low living standards and to mobilize all moral and material power in the interest of upward change. We believe that such a course would be less irritating to those of our fellows in whose life the church holds an important place. The result would be both constructive and enduring. The problem of the church is one involving the difference between form and function. We therefore would change its function confident that in time the form would be forced to change in order to harmonize with the newer functions.

I am not a religionist in the orthodox sense of the word, but rather one whose hopes and aspirations are built on the stern realities of life, whose one mission is to attack and destroy all social and economic evils as a prerequisite to the establishment of a solid foundation upon which to build a higher spiritual and cultural life. I believe implicitly in my religion as the noblest that any man can profess and practice. This belief, however, does not give me the right to destroy the religion or church of my brother, especially since destruction is not a necessary step toward the achievement of my religious aims.

In the life of the Negro in the United States, the church wields a tremendous influence and is directly responsible for his obvious conservatism

and contentment--a condition greatly to be deplored; yet this sad fact does not justify any effort to destroy the church, for the fault is not in the church per se but rather in the way the church is made to function.

Communists believe that violence is the ONLY method by which the transition from Capitalism to Socialism can be effected. They scoff at the idea of a gradual and peaceful change through the mediums of education and political democracy. For the Negro to accept such a course as the only way out of his present Gethsemane would be for him to invite extermination at the hand of a more or less hostile majority. The Negro as a minority group too long has been the victim of force--violence--so dares not trust his fate to these so-called Communists who pretend to have out-grown race-prejudice yet readily forget CLASS while they DO remember RACE. This fact was demonstrated to proof recently in a certain Virginia city where the Communists organized a mass meeting. An educated Negro, then a member of the Communist party worked day and night to insure the success of that meeting, only to find all Negroes directed to the gallery. He protested to his white comrades against such jim-crow practice, and was promptly charged with "putting race before class." He was unceremoniously expelled from the party.<sup>86</sup>

Freedom of expression and assemblage are invaluable human rights that should brook no interference or abridgement. That FREEDOM is one of the cardinal principles upon which the Socialist party stands. We believe that progress of an enduring sort can be made ONLY in free movement and discussion. Whether in Russia or America, wherever human rights are questioned, THERE Socialists will be found leading in the fight for such rights. Communists, on the other hand give lip service to freedom of speech and assemblage, but actually DENY it to others when and wherever they have the power to do so. *The Negro has a story to tell to the world. He has a great and just cause to plead at the bar of public opinion. For him then to join with those who would destroy freedom of speech and assemblage would be to cut himself from the only avenue through which to present his case and arouse the conscience of the civilized section of mankind in his behalf.*

Lastly, Socialists believe in genuine democracy, both political and industrial. Especially do we strive to bring into our industrial life the principle that those who work should own and control the tools as well as the product of their labor; we subscribe whole-heartedly to the principle that those who are governed are entitled to have a voice in government. Socialism is democracy applied to industry. We would substitute cooperation for capitalistic domination; we would establish common ownership in all agencies and institutions of a social or industrial nature; we would operate industry for service to society instead of for private profit; we would bring within reach of every man, woman and child in the world the God given right to enjoy peace, plenty and freedom. The Application of Socialist principles to our industrial life will give to the Negro the opportunity to stand on the common vantage ground of culture, education and freedom with all others who would usefully serve society.

Negro Labor News Service, April 15, 1930. Copy of the original release in the possession of the editors.

## 8. A NEGRO LOOKS AT THE 1932 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

By Frank R. Crosswaith

IT IS UNFORTUNATE that in considering a question of such vital importance as the selection of a President of the United States, Negroes should be influenced by the question of race. However, this is not of the Negroes' choosing. It is a condition forced upon us by the attitude of those of our fellow citizens who will not permit us to think in terms of a man, a fellow American, but rather in terms of race.

THE NEGRO is a worker and like all other intelligent workers should select that candidate and support that party which truly reflects his class interest. It should require no lavish oratory to persuade the Negro and all other workers

that government, when controlled by either Republicans or Democrats, functions in the interests of those who own property. It is enough to note the concern shown by the present Republican administration over the fate of banks, railroads and business generally, while the agonized wail of the workless millions goes unheeded. The conduct of the Republicans in this regard differs not one whit from that of the Democrats when they are in control of government. Both parties act upon the thesis that the rights of property transcend the rights of man.

IN FAIRNESS TO the facts of history, I am honor bound to state that once a real difference existed between these two political parties. Time has worn away that difference, however, and the last twenty years have seen both parties snugly nestled away in the arms of the owning class of the nation like two peas in a single pod. The Republican party, once friendly to the Negro, is adopting instead a "lily-white" policy. In the main this is due to the large investments made in the industries of the South by the Northern financiers, who finance and dominate the Republican party. The successful effort to "sterilize" the Republican party in the South marks both the economic and spiritual surrender of the party of Lincoln to Southern Bourbonism.

THE HISTORIC ATTITUDE of the Democratic party toward the Negro is too well known to merit recounting here. If Franklin D. Roosevelt becomes President of the United States he will owe his election largely to the support given him by the South. In the Chicago convention where he was nominated there were signs which read: "*Georgia Is His Southern Home.*" The Democrats will attempt to win Negro support by reminding us that Hoover, the Republican, jim-crowed our war mothers and widows making the pilgrimage to the graves of their dead in France. But they will not want Negroes to recall that Woodrow Wilson, the Democrat, also jim-crowed the sons and husbands of these same women when they made the journey across the seas "to make the world safe for democracy."

IN AN EFFORT to hide from the people the true economic and class nature of their parties Republican and Democratic politicians drag into the arena of discussion such relatively unimportant questions as normalcy, states rights and prohibition. On the real issues, namely, the continued legality of human exploitation, no difference distinguishes one party from the other.

LUCKILY FOR THE NEGRO, as for all workers, choice in the selection of the next President of the United States is not confined to the Republican Hoover and the Democrat Roosevelt. The Socialist party has chosen Norman Thomas to carry its standard of Industrial Democracy and social justice in the present campaign for the presidency. If the choice of the American people in the selection of a chief executive of the nation were to be made upon the basis of personal character, social vision and mental equipment, Norman Thomas would be overwhelmingly chosen next election day. But he would be the last man to consent to the obscuring of the real issues of the campaign by any reference to personal characteristics.

LIKE ALL OTHER men and women of intelligence and social vision, Norman Thomas is aware of the fact that the 1932 campaign is based on the class struggle, and that the question to be decided is whether the agencies of government are to remain in the hands of the capitalist, exploiting class, or whether government shall become an instrument truly responsive to the needs and hopes of all the people, and to which they may with confidence look for the protection and guarantee of their inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

TO THOSE NEGROES who are interested in a better day for themselves and their children, I recommend that they write to the Socialist headquarters at 2005 Seventh Avenue, New York City, for a copy of the Socialist platform, and note the opportunity offered to those who will be free to strike a blow for their freedom.

UNLIKE the Democrats and Republicans, the Socialist campaign is not merely to elect this or that individual, but rather it is a crusade for the new day--that day which the sun of Socialism spreads its mantle of silvery rays across the face of our war-torn and poverty cursed world will witness a race of useful workers cooperatively working and planning for the happiness and freedom of all God's children. In the words of a famous Negro poet:

The seeds of justice grow in unjust soil,  
and every struggle brings a deeper root -

A root of living strength that sprouts through toil -  
 Each heavy task but makes a taller shoot  
 Of freedom's tree whereon the buds of gall  
 Will bloom to precious fruit to feed us all.  
 Be not afraid dark toilers,  
 For the tree grows tall.

THE HOPE of the Negro masses, like the hopes of all workers of hand and brain, is in building a strong workers' party to carry out the ideals of men like Norman Thomas.

Negro Labor News Service, November 28, 1932. Copy of the original release in the possession of the editors.

#### 9. THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE NEGRO

by Frank R. Crosswaith

To all who are not blinded by ignorance and bound by the chains of tradition, it is quite obvious that time and the over-lapping financial interests of our economic masters have succeeded in wiping out every important difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. These two parties never were more like the traditional "Gold Dust Twins" than at present. Not even with respect to the elementary civil rights of the Negro, to say nothing of the rights of working people as such, do they now differ.

Under a Democratic administration Negro soldiers in war time were subjected to all manner of indignities and humiliations at home and abroad. Under a Republican administration the widows and mothers of these soldiers share the same fate as their departed dead.

#### The Repubocrat Twins

Whether it be the endorsement by Democrats of a high tariff wall by the South, whose agrarian interest once arrayed it against the tariff; or the attempt by Republicans to elevate Judge Parker to the Supreme Court bench and thus win over anti-Negro, anti-labor sentiment; the continued segregation of Negro civil service employees at Washington; or the brazen betrayal of the Negro masses by both parties, when in deference to the South they gladly lynched the Dyer anti-lynching bill--all the evidence points to the similarity of the two old parties.<sup>87</sup>

Both of them have entered into a dastardly conspiracy to keep the Negro helpless and hopeless, politically, socially, educationally and economically. Laws restricting suffrage in the Southern states and designed to deny to the Negro the most meager advantages of political democracy have been condoned by both parties. Through the use of "Property qualifications," so-called "educational tests," "grandfather clauses" and other subterfuges, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia continue to tax the Negro masses who inhabit these states without giving the Negro a voice in government. Lynching, legal and illegal, continues to haunt the Negro wherever he goes; while the tide of race prejudice rises and overflows into every county, city and state in the nation.<sup>88</sup>

#### A Bi-Party Shell Game

In November 1929, the Senate Lobby Investigating Committee made public a letter written to Vice President Curtis by Mr. James A. Arnold, manager of the Southern Tariff Association and a co-worker of Colonel Mann, leader of the lily white Republican forces of the South, in which "a plan" to blacken the Democratic party and whiten the Republican party was discussed. Negro Democrats were "to be elected in St. Louis, Chicago, New York and other Negro districts". Thus, once more the unsuspecting Negro masses were to be hoodwinked.

How the Negro can escape the present evils that surround him and effectively aid in bringing about a change for the betterment of his life in America is a question which the limits of this article will not permit an adequate answer. This much is certain, however, that, if the political future of the Negro is to be any brighter and safer than his past and present, then the Negro must realize that politics is not merely "the science of government" but that it is essentially a reflection of economic and class interests. The Negro politician must drop his familiar role of decoy by which he leads the masses of Negroes blindly into the slaughter houses of the two old parties; also the Negro politician must subordinate his own selfish desires for self, and place to the interest of the Negro masses.

#### For the Negro Worker

For the Negro to shift his political allegiance from the Republican to the Democratic party is no indication of intelligence nor of political progress, neither can he excuse his conduct on the grounds that there is "no other party." The Socialist party is one of the recognized major parties in the United States; its record with respect to the rights of the Negro is beyond reproach. From its birth the Socialist party has consistently stood on the side of the Negro, not in any condescending manner nor for selfish reasons, but because the Socialist party represents the interest of all workers, just as the Republican and Democratic parties represent the interest of those who live by exploiting the workers.

As a first step toward the eradication of the evils from which Negroes and all other workers now suffer, the Socialist party offers the following remedies:

1. A Federal anti-lynching bill.
2. A Federal anti-child labor law and educational laws. These laws will tend to reduce the illiteracy now prevalent in the South among whites and blacks and give to the children of both races there a better opportunity for education.
3. Admission of Negroes to juries and equal voting rights for all citizens.
4. The reduction of Southern representation in Congress until all citizens there are permitted to vote.
5. Unemployment insurance for all workers who are victims of involuntary idleness.
6. Enforcement of constitutional guarantees of economic, political and legal equality for the Negro.

To the extent that the Negro and all others who work, whether by hand or by brain, support the program of the Socialist party, to the same extent will their future be bright, and a nobler heritage left to succeeding generations.

Negro Labor News Service, August 30, 1932. Copy of the original release in the possession of the editors.

#### 10. THE NEGRO'S ROAD TO FREEDOM

By Ernest Rice McKinney

I do not intend to make any dogmatic exposition of this subject even though the title itself may carry that implication. I do however intend to point out very definitely what I believe to be at least one road over which the Negro must travel if he would arrive at a place of power along with other workers.

The Negro has always been a scab in the labor movement and a sore on its body. It seems that neither he nor the white worker has ever been able to think clearly through the problem to the reasons for this. The proper explanation, I believe, is found in the desire of American capitalism to have at hand a large and constant source of supply for the semi-skilled and unskilled tasks in the mills, mines and factories. I can illustrate this by

relating a recent happening in Alabama according to the report of a white worker. This man said that in a certain machine industry which employed twenty-four skilled machinists, automatic machines were installed. These machinists had been paid fifty cents an hour. With the automatic machines however, the operation could be performed with semi-skilled workers. Four Negroes were hired at twenty-five cents an hour. The white machinists were called in and told that a few of them could be reemployed but that they would have to work for the same wage as the Negroes were getting, twenty-five cents an hour and not fifty as formerly. This white worker had seen the light and was ready to take the Negro into the labor movement, not as a Negro but as a worker.

This incident is significant. It symbolizes most effectively one of the reasons for the weakness of our labor movement. Also I mention in passing that the thousands of Negroes who came into the steel industry were a part of the means at the disposal of the steel companies for defeating this strike. It is one of the ironies of history that William Z. Foster, who is now linked up with a Negro in a political campaign and who was the leader of that strike, did not at that time believe that it was worthwhile to include the Negro worker in his organization efforts.

Of course the Negroes themselves, through their leaders have contributed to this evil situation. These leaders have been concerned with some vapory thing called the Negro's "rights" and with job hunting for themselves. Their activities have been almost wholly political. There are two things that Negro leaders don't seem to know; that no group has any rights if that group is not strong enough to take them. No dominant group voluntarily gives "rights" to a weak group. Secondly, Negro leaders seem reluctant to accept the fact that political power follows from and grows out of economic power. You almost never see a Negro leader take a strong and definite stand for the active participation of Negro workers in out and out workers' movements.

There are reasons for this which I don't have space here to go into in detail. One is the fact that the Negro has been conditioned into becoming a rank and stark conservative. We are not even liberal or progressive not to say anything about radical. It is no unusual thing to hear a Negro say: "If I am going to mix with white folks I want it to be rich white folks, not poor white trash." To be sure this attitude is ridiculous but it is a reality and must be faced as such. He does not understand that he can only mix with the "rich white folks" as lackey, flunky, beggar or wage slave. As a rule his approach is that of a flunky or beggar. There is not much that we can get from our leaders that is enlightening at this point for the reason that the majority of them are in the roll of flunky and beggar.

#### White Workers Are Guilty

This means that we Negroes do not understand the economic scene and the industrial set-up. The tragedy is that white workers in this field have ignored us and left us to our ignorance, low wages, long hours, the worst and meanest jobs and a disproportionate amount of unemployment. The white worker helped the ruling class to segregate us, proscribe us and discriminate against us. And it is the white worker who lynches the Negro worker. It never dawned on the white toilers in the capitalist vineyard that the black wage slaves were part and parcel of them. I believe though that three years of unemployment will create a new outlook. When a black and white ex-worker approach a garbage can together for breakfast their actual equality in the eyes of the ruling class is thereby proclaimed.

There are Negro leaders who say that our road to freedom lies in the direction of the establishment of strong and powerful business institutions. I confess that I once flirted with this idea, which I now hold to be utterly defeatist from the standpoint of the Negro masses. These advisers have taken their cue from white capitalism. But evidently they are not observing the course of capitalism in this day and time. They have their eyes on the spring-time of capitalism when it was possible for any little fellow to open a small business, work hard and watch it grow into a giant corporation employing thousands of workers. This is not true of business today. Corporations are born full-grown and mature. They begin to swell, expand and puff up. There must be capital enough to initiate this swelling and puffing at once.



## Negro Capitalism--For Whom

The idea is that Negro plants, factories and businesses of all sorts could hire Negro workers and thereby raise the standard of living and create wealth within the group. These Negro business institutions would also compete with white companies not only for our own patronage but also for the patronage of the whites. Such successful competition would change the outlook of the whites toward the Negro and in time everything would be sweetness and light. For instance if Negro insurance companies become strong enough they can take \$60,000,000 worth of business away from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. And then the Metropolitan will be glad to hire Negro agents (they don't employ any now) in order to get some of that business back. And furthermore, insurance companies will not discriminate against Negroes (as they do now) in the types of policies which they are permitted to buy.

The main idea of course is to increase the supply of jobs for the Negro. He is refused many types of employment by the white employer and so it is argued that Negroes must establish their own businesses in order to provide for their own people. Hence the rosy picture of how much better off the Negro would be if he were a big business man, a "producer" and not merely a consumer. If we have Negro capitalists, these capitalists will employ hundreds and thousands of Negro workers. Retail stores and other shops will spring up. Banks will open and Negro credit will flow into Negro enterprises. This wealth will trickle down to the workers; they will have full dinner pails, a chicken in every pot, a car in every garage and a cutaway in every wardrobe.

There are many things wrong in this picture. The whole scheme is out of gear and unrealistic. My chief objection is that even if such a state of affairs could be brought to pass, the mass of Negroes would not be benefited. I challenge any Negro who advocates this scheme to submit any evidence or reasoning that can show that a Negro manufacturer, or banker or mine owner or utility magnate would act any differently toward employees than a white employer would act. I mean to say that Negro workers would get the same type of treatment from a Negro employer that they would get from a white employer. They would be exploited just as they are exploited now. They would work for low wages and would be subjected to the injunction, the yellow dog contract, the lockout and the rigors of industrial conflict just as are workers employed by white owners. This all, for the reason that Negro business would be capitalist business the same as white business. The men who owned Negro business would be capitalists and integral parts of the capitalist system. The evils which I have enumerated are inherent in the system. The object of the black business man would be to make profits just as it is the object of the white business man to make profits. Our business men would be forced to go along with the system, else there would be no profits and their businesses would collapse instantly.

I am saying that this would be true for the mass of Negro workers. They would get no more out of it than they get now from the white bosses. It is conceivable that they would get less. This is the important thing to stress; not whether Negro capitalism would help a few Negroes to get rich, as white capitalism aids only a few whites to acquire wealth but rather what would be the relation of Negro capitalism to the Negro workers as a whole. I have said and wish to reemphasize that no benefits would accrue to the Negro masses simply because the color of capitalism had been changed. This means that Negroes can no more afford to compromise with black capitalism than they can afford to compromise with white capitalism. This is the first and most important lesson that the Negro worker must learn.

## Class Not Color

This means that the Negro worker must give up many foolish notions about race consciousness and race solidarity and begin to acquire a far more fundamental and basic class consciousness and class solidarity transcending the bounds of race. This proposal assumes of course the further proposal that the white worker do the same. Among the Negro masses there is urgent need for education at this point. It seems that we have not learned yet the fact that we are being exploited by Negro leaders who although almost entirely ignorant of the historical course of capitalism, of its theoretical assumptions and of its practical applications on the industrial and financial fields and of the

many proposals for revision or complete overthrow of capitalism; yet are cunning and shrewd enough to know that they can and do profit by the system. Hence these leaders desire the continuance of capitalism and are zealous in opposing the entrance of the Negro masses into any organization which is not at least partially under the domination of themselves or their own white bosses and allies. All of this of course is a suggestion for the organization of Negroes into a mass movement that has for its ultimate aim the complete overthrow of Negro capitalism along with the overthrow of white capitalism.

This brings us to a great difficulty: How shall the Negro worker be organized? It is easy to reply, "Just as the white worker is organized." But this reply means exactly nothing. It means nothing for the reason that such a reply is far too simple and probably ignores the realities of the American scene. And for the same reason it would be equally useless to consider any proposal to organize the Negro along entirely different lines from those of the white workers and always into separate unions.

#### Watch Your Step

I am ready to admit, without accepting any hard and fast rule, that there may be places and conditions which make it necessary to have separate organizations for Negroes and whites. I am convinced that identical methods cannot be used say, in Mississippi and Ohio. Conditions may vary from industry to industry that may make it necessary to return to conference and overhaul some of our theories. We must face the actualities of race prejudice and misunderstanding. We must take into consideration, to the extent that we are capable, all of the historical and psychological factors that enter into the problem. We must consider the stage of development--I should say the relative stage of development--of the Negro and white workers as well as the relative stage of development of the two groups in particular industries. And I take it that the problem will not present itself in the same way in organized industries as it does in those that are unorganized.

The first requisite is absolute honesty, a high degree of humility and a determination to experiment patiently, persistently and intelligently. Guess work, presuppositions and old line reactions to the race question will not fill the bill. Men on the job and facing the Negro-white problem daily are just as apt to make mistakes as so-called theorists who are not in daily contact with Negro workers. All of the vague theories do not come from college professors, car windows sociologists and female investigation enthusiasts. On the question of organizing the Negro worker there are apt to be just as many empty theorists and get-no-where philosophers in the labor movement as one can find elsewhere. It has always amused me to listen to one of these fellows, who brags so much about practice and experience over against theory, begin to sputter theory pure and undefiled, when he gets to consideration of the Negro worker. The trouble with these fellows is that they do not understand the nature and function of theory, nor the fact that an alleged practical man may himself be a pure theorist. This is apt to be particularly true when this type of labor leader is dealing with the problem of the Negro worker.

#### CPLA Has a Program

To get back to the specific matter of organizing the Negro worker, I hold that no one can sit any one at any one place and say how it should be done all over the United States. This would be silly. It would be just as silly however to follow or advocate the method that has been followed by the A.F. of L. and other groups. The one best guide I believe, is the program and principles of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action. The principles laid here are basically and theoretically correct. This program will be readily accepted by the Negro workers if it is presented to them by white and Negro leaders who themselves have already absorbed these principles, and who have allowed these tenets to become operative in their own lives. This type of leader will be morally, intellectually and practically qualified to present CPLA to Negro workers just as he or she will be eminently qualified to present the program to other racial groups. This is the only type of worker that will develop the ability to adapt the program of CPLA on the field, to the Negro worker in relationship to the white worker and to the community, and at the same time hold to the basic philosophy, and push on to the goal of a workers' commonwealth that will include all workers of every creed, race and color.

I have purposely refrained from any extended recommendations concerning technique for the reason that I do not and could not know what to recommend in a detailed way. This is a matter that should be developed in conferences and before the workers. Discussion, frank and honest and then application of the results of the discussions on the field should be the rule and I believe the only rule worth laying down.

It is perhaps needless to add that the Negro's road to freedom, I believe, lies in the road set down by the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, just as I believe that this is the white worker's road to freedom; the white and black worker indissolubly bound up together to achieve a workers' republic managed by all the workers for all the workers.

*Labor Age*, 21 (September, 1932): 12-13, 29.

## 11. NOTES FOR SPEAKERS

Socialist Party of America  
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Harold Kelso, Editor

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The Sunday closest to Lincoln's birthday, each year, has been set aside by the Federal Council of Churches as "Race Relations Sunday." An inclosure with these notes gives the essential data prepared by the Council for speeches to be made on this day; it will be seen that this material covers the problems of Mexican and Oriental peoples in the United States, as well as the question of prejudice against and oppression of the Negro.

This topic is made especially timely by the recent wave of lynchings (of which some of the victims were whites), the Scottsboro case, the revelations by the Urban League and other organizations of the severity of the depression in its effect on Negroes, and the campaign of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other organizations to remove some of the injustice to Negroes involved in recent N.R.A. codes.<sup>89</sup>

### Economic Bases of Race Discrimination

Without denying the existence of ethical, sociological and political problems of race which to some extent can be corrected by education and legislation, Socialists nevertheless hold that the race question in the United States is fundamentally economic.

*Peonage* Peonage is a system of serfdom, the principle of which is, that if an employee owes his master he must continue to serve him until the debt is paid, the only escape being that if another employer is willing to come forward and assume the debt the employee is allowed to transfer his obligation to the new master.

The "emancipation" of Negroes disrupted agriculture and industry in southern states and made it necessary to reorganize the labor policies which had heretofore prevailed. The freed Negroes were without masters, but lumber must be cut, cotton must be picked and turpentine must be dipped. In short, profits must be made. Negroes must work or be made to work, besides, they must work cheaply.

Thus the "black code" and vagrancy laws of the South. These laws provide for the imprisonment of all Negroes who have no visible means of support. The result is that hordes of unemployed Negro workers are hustled off to jail or convict camp. Their fines are paid by the lumber, cotton and turpentine operators; they are assigned into their custody, put to work at starvation wages besides being compelled to trade at the company's store, which prevents their ever getting out of debt. They are also compelled to sign certain labor contracts, the non-performance of which is proof presumptive of fraudulent intent at the time of signature, which state laws make a crime. The employer

can arrest the worker on charges of receiving money under false pretenses, he is convicted and fined, and being penniless, he can go to jail, or accept payment of his fine by the same or another employer. The judge assigns the labor of the "convict" to the man who pays the fine until the worker can pay back the sum advanced out of his wages. The employer has acquired a serf under the legal authority of the state.

This is peonage. It is an economic system. It is maintained for profits.

*The Crop-Lien System* The crop-lien system is the method of mortgaging the planted and even unplanted crops of poor farmers. These workers need provisions until harvesting time; the white merchants supply them for a part of their crop, the share being so large as to keep a perpetual lien on the farmers' production. The Negro farmer, being in debt, cannot leave his farm. To escape is to violate a contract, a crime which may result in the farmer being sent to a convict camp under the laws of "fraud."

*Tenant Farming* Sometimes the crop-lien system is called "sharecropping," in which case the farmer is a tenant who is provided with land and provisions by the landowner instead of local white merchants. Usually several sets of capitalists profit by such transactions, because the landowner frequently can make an extra profit by borrowing funds from banks or loan agencies, even though the interest rates charged are exorbitant.

*The Negro Industrial Worker* To escape the impossible conditions of the southern farm, Negroes have migrated to the cities. Out of every 1,000 Negro workers, approximately 400 belong to the most unskilled class of labor, 180 are domestic servants usually under conditions of long hours, hard work and low pay, 105 are semi-skilled laborers, 85 are skilled workers, 100 are tenant farmers, 90 are farmers working their own land usually under vassalage to merchants, 40 are in business and the professions. (Crisis, April, 1933)

Supplementing the natural desire of the Negroes to escape the unfavorable farm conditions under which they work, especially during the war-time boom and the period of Coolidge "prosperity," was the desire of industry for an additional supply of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The stoppage of immigration also contributed to this desire. In some cases, Negro workers were imported to take the places of white workers on strike.

Under favorable conditions the lot of the Negro worker in the city is none too good. In this depression time, he is frequently the first to be laid off because industries tend to keep their skilled rather than their unskilled workers as a nucleus for renewed operations. The Negro has likewise not been so well organized to protect his interests in the job as has the white worker. The competition for jobs makes white workers race-conscious when questions of discharging employees arise, and to the extent that sympathy enters into modern business, the employer may keep white rather than Negro labor in hard times.

In general, however, the hardships which the Negro has suffered from the depression are worse only in degree than those of the white population. Both are victims of the failure of the profit system to provide security.

### The Myth of Negro Inferiority

The inferior economic and social status of the Negro race has made many of its members illiterate and has denied privileges of culture and technical training to the race as a whole. The tradition that the Negro is dirty, or lazy, or mentally inferior, or mechanically incompetent, just because he is a Negro, is unfortunately widespread. Deficiencies which are due to lack of advantages are presumed to be the result of racial defects.

To some extent this feeling is kept alive by the very competition for jobs which is fostered by capitalism. While it is perhaps an exaggeration, at least for the northern states, to charge capitalists with an attempt directly to foster race prejudice, certainly the attitudes indirectly fostered by the philosophy of "every man for himself and devil take the hindmost" tend to discriminate against the Negro, who is a convenient object of scorn because he can be so readily singled out.

The material in the "Data for Speakers" leaflet enclosed gives a good summary of Negro achievements which shows the injustice of the myth that the race is inherently inferior.

## Socialism and the Negro

*Some False Trails* Booker T. Washington held that all Negro workers should learn a trade, save their money and go into business for themselves. But the idea of trying to become a capitalist and thus escape from the robbery and subjection that is the lot of Negro workers is like the advice to run away in the days of slavery. A few could escape and reach the northern states or Canada, and thus be relieved of the tyranny of white slave owners. But the whole Negro population of the South could not escape slavery in this way. The mass of them were doomed to be slaves until all are emancipated. The same is true today. The mass of Negro wage workers are doomed to be wage workers all their lives until all wage workers are made free.<sup>90</sup>

W. E. B. DuBois (*Crisis*, May, 1933) argues that exploitation of the Negroes comes just as much from the white proletariat as from the white capitalists, and therefore that the only hope for the race is its own organization to protect it from all classes of whites, also to protect it from the development of capitalistic exploitation from Negro capitalists. It is unfortunately true that race hatreds and prejudices are common among workers, but the answer does not lie in making the cleavage wider by organizing Negro workers on color lines. All of the usual arguments against "dual" unions apply here, and they are intensified by differences which capitalists can play upon to keep labor divided.

Marcus Garvey once offered the Negroes hope in a movement to return to Africa. Garveyism fortunately has collapsed as an organization, but as a dream it is still held by some Negroes. Aside from the tremendous difficulties in moving a population of over ten million into new homes which have not yet been built, it should be obvious that an all-Negro Africa built on the American cultural heritage which would be taken there would simply mean a capitalist Africa instead of a capitalist America, with black masters instead of white. If our analysis of capitalism is correct, the lot of Negroes under this plan--an impossible dream in the first place--would not be improved.

*What the Whites Must Do* The American Federation of Labor does lip-service to the idea of organizing Negro workers on the same basis as whites, but:

21 international and national labor unions exclude Negroes by constitutional provision

9 international and national labor unions admit Negroes but discriminate against them in some way

2 internationals admit Negro members but refuse them the right to use union employment agencies to get jobs

7 internationals admit Negroes freely but only to separate organizations

6 internationals only admit Negroes without restriction

The usual A.F. of L. procedure is to organize Negro workers separately in federal unions responsible not to internationals but direct to the A.F. of L. itself. Obviously this record of discrimination proves that if the Negro is to be organized as a worker in the economic field the whites themselves must change their minds and attitudes on the race question. To bring this about is an essential aim of Socialist education.

In many other ways those whites who see the economic implications of the race problem must be more awake to possibilities for cooperation with Negroes, organized and unorganized, for the common good of all workers. With many of us it is not prejudice but indifference or laziness which keeps us from working with groups from other races who have goals similar to our own.

*What the Negro Must Do* On the other hand, the Negro himself must learn that the solution of his problems demands that he think and act as a class-conscious as well as a race-conscious worker. The labor power of a Negro worker embodied in a bar of steel, a car of coal or the basement of a building is just as essential as the labor power of the white worker. The color line is not seen in the steel, the coal or the building.

To labor, a worker must get the consent of the owners of industry. However obtained, the present masters of industry have surrounded their holdings with laws, court decisions, police power and government in general. To make these institutions favorable to owners instead of workers, the capitalists contribute financially to two political parties, the Republican and the Democratic. To fool the workers into voting for a "change" is a definite part of the capitalist control of the workings of government.

To build a new economic system based on service rather than greed, a

workers' political party is needed. That is why the Socialists are organized, and that is why we appeal to Negroes to support us in our struggles to improve workers' conditions by building a new social order.

Because an overwhelming proportion of Negroes are workers, any measure which will help workers will help Negroes in a special degree. Because an overwhelming proportion of Negroes are workers, they stand to lose more by being fooled into voting for capitalist parties than does the white race in general. *Negroes must become politically conscious of the interests of the working class, must join as Socialists in their fight for the working class, if they are to win freedom from their present oppressors.*

*Notes For Speakers*, mimeographed fly sheet for Socialist speakers. Copy of the original in possession of the editors.

## 12. TRUE FREEDOM

By

Frank R. Crosswaith and Alfred Baker Lewis<sup>91</sup>

### The Negro Problem

At the bottom the Negro question is a labor question and is part of the whole problem of justice for the underdog for those who labor and labor hard and long, yet get only a small part of what they produce in return.

At the very time when white masters, with the aid of lawyers and political parties that they controlled, were enacting laws to make Negro slavery legal and right, those same masters were also making laws to provide slavery for white workers. For nearly 200 years some white workers were slaves in America. They were brought by thousands to America as contract slaves. Sometimes they sold themselves to shipmasters for from 7 to 14 years' service in order to pay for their passage. Other thousands were political offenders sold for long terms of service to American planters. Some were actually kidnaped in British ports and brought to America and sold for long terms of service. White workers in the early years of America were often sold for terms of service for comparatively minor breaches of the laws, as James O'Neal in his masterly study, "The Workers in American History" has pointed out.<sup>92</sup>

The servitude under which the Negro was compelled to labor was called chattel slavery and was generally for life. The servitude under which the white worker was compelled to labor was called indentured service and was generally for a long but definitely limited term of years. Otherwise the conditions of their slavery were usually the same. Frequently in the American colonies the laws for Negro slaves applied to these white slaves as well. Both could be parted from their families. Both could be whipped by the master. Both had to wear the cast off clothing of the master.

Mr. O'Neal has put the matter very clearly. He says in his pamphlet, "The Next Emancipations";--

"The laws to catch runaways applies to whites as well as Negroes. This was even put into the Constitution of the United States. Read Article IV, Section 3. It remains where the 'fathers' of the government put it. It reads: 'No person held to SERVICE or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such SERVICE or labor, but shall be delivered upon claim of the party to whom such SERVICE or labor may be due.'"

"The word 'service' was inserted in this clause to include white 'indentured servants' who escaped from their masters. The word 'labor' applied to the Negro. The word 'persons' included both. Therefore, whites as well as Negroes were regarded and treated as slaves. The only difference was that the 'indentured servant' was not a slave for life.

". . . The white workers who were not 'indentured' servants were wage workers. Yet their wages were generally fixed by law. For petty offenses

they were sold into indentured service. Their terms could be increased for disobedience, for striking a brutal master, for trying to run away, or for some other reason. So that a man bound to serve three years or five years might serve ten years or twenty years or thirty years."

#### The Negro Question is a Part of the Labor Question

It is becoming increasingly clear to all intelligent people that the color of one's skin or the place where one was born is purely accidental as far as the individual is concerned. Although we have made great progress in science and invention, we have not yet been able to choose our parents or birthplace. Thus wholly without our consent or knowledge we were born, some of us born with a white skin, others with a black, yellow, brown, or red skin. All of us discover ourselves as having been born in a land which we did not select to honor by being born there. None of us were privileged to choose our parents and the religious beliefs most of us have accepted, were chosen for us. This being the case, no normal and intelligent person can find a justifiable basis upon which to be proud of factors over which they themselves had no control.

Aside from the accident of birth and a different birthplace, however, we note a far more vital fact; namely, that no matter where we were born or the color of our skin, or the religious creeds we profess, all of us are confronted with the urge and desire to live and promote our happiness. To do so we must have food, clothing and shelter. These things are essential to the life of all mankind regardless of race, creed, color, nationality or sex. Not only are they vitally necessary to all human existence, but in the search for them practically every other consideration is more or less subordinated. How to get a living, is the fundamental economic problem of all mankind.

#### The Class Struggle

When a worker gets a job he expects and gets at least some pay. He doesn't get anywhere near enough but he gets something. Actually the worker sells his labor power to the employer because he can't get a living any other way. The employer buys his labor power. The worker sells labor power, the employer buys it, and the price of labor power is the wage or salary paid.

When someone is trying to buy a Ford car or any other article, we all know that the interests of the buyer and the seller are not the same. The buyer wants to buy for a low price, and the seller wants to sell for a high price. Their interests are opposite. If a housewife buys a turkey on Thanksgiving, she is pleased if the price of turkeys is low and the fellow who sells turkeys is displeased. He wants the price to be high.

Exactly the same clash of interests exists when labor power is bought and sold. The owner of industry or of the plantation wants to buy labor power cheaply. The seller of labor power, that is, the worker, wants to sell for a high price, or in other words, he wants to get a wage or salary as high as possible. There is a direct clash of interests between the seller and buyer of labor power.

The Ford car or the dead turkey does not care whether its price is high or low. But the worker does care whether the price of his labor power is high or low. If he gets a high price, he can have a high standard of living. He can buy wholesome nourishing food and good clothes. He can live in a good home and give his children a good education. If the price of his labor power is low he has to send his children out to help earn a living for the family as soon as the law allows, instead of keeping them at school. He is poorly nourished, perhaps dangerously undernourished. He is clad in rags and he has to live in an unsanitary tenement, shack, or hovel. His whole standard of living is low if the price of his labor is low. That is why the clash of interests between the worker, who wants to sell labor power for a high wage, and the owner of industry, who wants to buy labor power cheaply, becomes a class struggle between the owning class and the working class.

#### The Owners of Industry Are Top Dog in the Class Struggle

In that class struggle the owners of industry have all the advantage. The capitalist class, which is the name the economists give to the owners of

industry, is "top dog" in the class struggle. This is true firstly, because the capitalists own the workers' jobs. They can fire the worker, but the workers cannot fire the owners. The capitalists' lawyers and political henchmen have fixed that.

Secondly, the capitalist class is "top dog" in the class struggle because the workers have to sell their labor power in order to live. They must keep on selling their labor every week, otherwise they starve. The capitalists have to buy some labor power but they do not have to buy all the labor power that is offered for sale. They don't have to buy the labor power of any particular worker. In fact, if they didn't buy any labor power at all for a time, they would lose only a comparatively small part of their year's profits; while the workers would be in a very serious predicament and face starvation.

This is clear if we put it in a personal way. If you do not get a job, you lose all your savings, then you practically starve. But if the boss doesn't hire you, he only stands to lose a tiny part of his profits, and he probably will not lose anything at all, for there are plenty other workers he can get instead of you.

When you sell your labor power, you go with it. Again that is true whether you are a white or a Negro worker. You are forced to sell yourself piecemeal day by day, week by week, month by month, to the capitalist class who control the jobs and own the industries and plantations of the country. You must get a job in order to eat and support your family. That is your weakness and the master's strength. Knowing your needs, the owners of industry are able to take advantage of the situation and buy your labor for very small wages compared to the value of what you produce.

Now, a worker might sell his labor power for several generations, if he lived that long, and he would never become rich. But a capitalist can buy labor power for a few years and become comfortably wealthy. The reason for this is that the workers by their labor add extra value to the raw materials, and when the finished product is sold the capitalist owner gets the extra values as his profit.

The workers get wages and salaries in payment for their labor power when they are lucky enough to get a job. But the wages and salaries total only a small part of the value of what they produce. The difference between the full value of what they produce and the wages or salaries they get goes to the capitalist as unearned income in the form of rent, interest, dividends, and profits taken from the product of the worker's labor. By taking this surplus value or unearned income from the product of the labor of hundreds and sometimes thousands of workers in a given plant or factory, the owners of industry are able to become wealthy.

#### Unearned Income For Owners

The fact that the people who get the largest incomes under our present capitalist system are not the people who work but rather the people who own for a living is plain from the government's own statistics. We will not take the capitalist system today as an example to prove our point for everyone knows that the system is sick. So many people are out of work that one capitalist gets more out of industry today than all the 9 or ten million unemployed put together.

In order to be fair to the capitalist system, let us therefore, go back to the time before the depression when the system was supposed to be working well. The income tax figures of the Federal Government show that in 1929 there were 511 people in the United States who reported incomes of more than one million dollars. These 511 people had a bigger total income than all the wheat and cotton farmers in the United States received from the sale of their wheat and cotton in 1930. They received that big income from rent, interest, dividends, profit, and the proceeds from gambling on the stock exchange or in real estate, and not from doing some useful service in behalf of their fellow human beings.

Sometimes the members of the wealthy class worked for their money when they were young. More often they didn't. They simply inherited their wealth so that they never had to work for a living. Sometimes the members of the capitalist class are decent people, philanthropic and charitable and interested in civic affairs. Often they are gamblers and wastrels whose luxurious living is a stench to the nostrils of their fellow beings. But, whether good or bad,



they all get their unearned income nevertheless.

Some professors in our colleges and universities prostitute their intellect and learning by teaching their students that people get rich because of superior brains and ability. But such teachers are only hired liars. Suppose a rich man who was getting his income in the form of rent, interest, dividends and profits should die, as all of us must die eventually. His brains are dead too--no one can deny that. Yet, "his" income keeps on coming into his estate the same as before he and his brain died. It was not his brains but the brains and brawn of someone else who produced that income. The rich man simply took it because the capitalist class and the old line politicians whom they control have made the laws that way.

"You produce wealth and I will take it!" is what the master class in America--the capitalist owners of plantations, industries and banks--say to those who toil. And this is the essence of slavery.

#### Exploitation of Workers

Unearned income for the owners of industry means exploitation of the workers. You can only consume what someone else has labored to produce. So if the members of the capitalist class are getting enormous unearned incomes and living lavishly as they do, it necessarily means that the members of the working class are getting less than what they sweated to produce.

Suppose we regard the stream of goods and services that is constantly pouring forth from the mines, mills, farms and factories of our country as a great river of commodities flowing from the producers of raw materials through the manufacturers, then through the wholesalers and retailers, to the ultimate consumers. Most of us who are adults and are employed are putting something into that stream of goods and services. We are producing food or raw materials, or automobiles, or clothes or building homes, or furnishing the services of a store clerk, a doctor, a truck driver or a teacher, etc. We are taking something out of that stream of goods and services but we are also putting something in. That is fair and just.

But the owners of industry, the capitalist class, have put a dam out into the stream of goods and services, and are sluicing off part of its life-giving flow of commodities into a private pool of their own. They are doing that while putting little or nothing back into the stream. That necessarily means that all those who are contributing some useful work or service to the stream of commodities are getting out of that stream less than the full value of what they put into it. Unearned income for the owning class means exploitation for the working class. It means poverty. It means war. It means for the workers, a level of life below the standards of decency and human comfort to which all God's children are entitled. It means also that the rich grow richer while the poor grow poorer and lose their jobs.

In the process of exploitation of the working class by the master class under capitalism there is no real or essential difference between the position of the Negro worker and that of the white worker. Not a bit. A white boss will hire Negro or white scabs to prevent white or Negro workers from organizing to advance their wages or reduce their hours of labor. Negro or white landlords will raise the rent of Negro or white tenants in spite of race or color. It is therefore obvious that whatever difference of interest there is between members of the human race is primarily economic. By the same token we come to the conclusion that the economic interest of all workers is identical. It is one of the world's great tragedies that while the members of the owning class have always placed their general economic and financial interest above and beyond race, color, creed, and national lines, the members of the working class on the other hand have permitted themselves to be divided far too often by these issues, thus weakening the working class and by the same token strengthening the owning class.

The capitalist master is a capitalist master, whether his skin is black or white. The wage worker is a wage worker, whether his skin is black or white. If the black worker toils for a white master he does not improve his lot by working for a black master. The white worker is not a free man because a white capitalist employs him and exploits him. He is robbed just the same as the Negro worker is robbed.

The great fact for both white and Negro workers to understand is that as wage workers they have common interests. WAGE LABOR, which is really wage

slavery, unites them within the same class. Both sell their labor power for wages. Both must sell it to some capitalist owner of mills, factories, mines or plantations. Capitalist masters want to purchase it at a low price and workers want to sell it at a high price.

#### Why Prejudice?

Unfortunately, the popular prejudice which so often exists today against the Negro has sometimes found its way into sections of the labor movement. However, it is well to recognize that the labor movement recruits its membership from among the people who make up the Nation's population. These people have become accustomed to excluding the Negro from public places, to restricting him to slum residential neighborhoods, to lynching and other evil practices. Under the circumstances, therefore, we can well understand the occasional presence of racial prejudice and discrimination within the ranks of labor.

We must also recognize that the prejudice leveled against the Negro is based upon ignorance, cultivated and fostered by the owning and employing class in order to divide and weaken the ranks of the working class. To divide and rule is an old Roman practice. The American ruling class has improved upon that technique. While the Negro was a slave this prejudice against him was at first comparatively mild and less obvious. "Massa in de cold, cold ground" and other paeans of loyalty and devotion to the white slaveholders testify to the fact that the master welcomed and cultivated every evidence of loyalty by the slave. The propaganda in those days was intended to divide the Negro slaves and the white indentured servants. In order to effect this division the white slaves were made to believe that if slavery was destroyed, the freed blacks would monopolize the available work and thus consign the white workers to idleness, poverty and privation.

Prejudice as a means of weakening labor has always been a handy tool. Once the New England aristocracy generated against Irish workers a prejudice so effective that many of the skilled trades and professions were closed to Irish workmen. Because they were mostly Catholics their churches and convents were burnt and in some cases they were even mobbed. This anti-Irish prejudice in New England was like the anti-Jewish prejudice which rich land barons of Russia developed among the ignorant Russian peasants under the Czar, and which Adolf Hitler today is promoting in Nazi Germany and in all the lands that he can seize. Such has always been the conduct of the scheming ruling class bent upon perpetuating its robbery and exploitation of the working class. Because the robbers are so few in numbers while the robbed working class is so numerous,—it is absolutely necessary for the robber owning class to divide the working class along lines that may be handy, so that the workers will waste their energies fighting among themselves instead of against their common class enemy, the exploiters.

We have seen that the so-called race question is at bottom a class or labor question. How then does prejudice, with its segregation, Jim Crowism and lynching get into the picture? We know it is there. But how did it get there and how can we get it out? As stated before, the owners of industry want to keep the workers divided so that they can exploit them more easily and without having the workers put up too much resistance.

Suppose a farmer with a team of mules wanted to overwork them. Of course the mules would certainly have sense enough to kick, when the farmer overworked and whipped them to make them pull the plow or wagon faster. If the farmer would only get a pair of mules that would start kicking at and fighting with each other instead of kicking at him when he whipped them and overworked them, he could escape any penalty for driving them mercilessly. He could overwork them without fear of a kick.

That is exactly the situation when the owning class exploits white and Negro workers, or Catholic and Protestant workers or Jewish and Gentile workers. The ruling class must find a way to keep the workers divided so that they won't kick effectively to abolish or curtail the exploitation from which they suffer in common.

In other words, prejudice pays the bosses and harms the interests of the workers whatever their nationality, race, creed or color. As a result of prejudice different groups of workers will despise, or oppose, or fight each other instead of using their spare time and energy to oppose the exploitation

of the working class as a whole by the employing class as a whole.

The workers might get together and form unions which would reduce the hours of labor and raise pay. They might organize and support a political party which would provide a really generous old age pension for everyone at a reasonable age limit, or would provide free college education for whites and Negroes alike, just as we have free high schools in most northern States. They might also provide for pay through a system of unemployment insurance to everyone unable to find work through no fault of his own. They might demand that the money for the adequate old age pensions and unemployment relief should be paid for by taxing profits, big incomes, inheritances, or the proceeds from stock exchange gambling. The workers might even abolish exploitation altogether by having the people of our country own and control the industries and natural resources of our land, if prejudice, and ignorance, which is the mother of prejudice, did not keep them divided. Then the members of the capitalist class would have to work for a living--and of course they think that would be terrible. So prejudice pays.

In the South the Ku Klux Klan is used to stir up hatred and prejudice between Negroes and whites and thus keep the workers divided. In the North where there are not so many Negroes, the Ku Klux Klan was used to stir up prejudice between Catholics and Protestants--to keep the workers divided. In many places where there were a good many Jews, the Ku Klux Klan was used to stir up hatred and ill will between Jews and Gentiles--to keep the workers divided.

Father Coughlin and a number of other demagogues have been busy spreading poisonous hatred between Jews and Gentiles. Since Hitler came to power a large number of purveyors of poison propaganda, notably a man named Pelley, head of an organization known as the Silver Shirts, have been busy putting out the sort of anti-Semitism which was and is the stock in trade of Hitler's propaganda.<sup>93</sup>

Recently, the Ku Klux Klan has shown more clearly than ever the real power and purpose back of its dirty work by declaring opposition to the C.I.O. unions as one of its purposes along with the maintenance of White Protestant, and Negro supremacy.<sup>94</sup>

Undoubtedly the most dangerous of these sowers of race prejudice is Father Coughlin, whose Christian Front and Christian Mobilizers are extremely busy blaming all our economic troubles on the Jews. The part of the country which is worst off economically is the South, and there are hardly any Jews there; but that does not stop the noisy lies of these followers of Father Coughlin.

Whether they know it or not, they are doing work useful to the exploiting class, in sowing division and disunity among the workers and those who suffer from exploitation.

"Divide and rule" was the religion of the masters of the old Roman Empire, the most successful imperialist rulers that the world has ever known. It is the practice of the master class in America today, though they are usually too clever openly to proclaim it.

Mussolini, a dictator serving the interests of the Italian capitalists and keeping the Italian workers ground under the iron heel of Fascism, is trying to prevent working class complaints against himself and his dictatorship by stirring up the hatred of the Italian against the inoffensive blacks in Ethiopia. Hitler, a dictator serving the interests of the German capitalists and grinding the working class of Germany under the iron heel of oppression, rose to power by stirring up with base lies prejudices against Jews.

In Haverstraw, N.Y., recently, the Ku Klux Klan was used by Jewish manufacturers to terrorize Jewish garment workers who were forming a union to secure higher wages and decent conditions of work. Race prejudice is always a good investment for the master class.

In Peabody, Massachusetts, the center of the leather manufacturing industry of the East, the employing class deliberately put Greeks and Turks to work side by side in the big manufacturing plants there. They know that in the old country every time a Greek saw a Turk he used to shoot at him, except when the Turk got in his shot first. The manufacturers thought that in this way the workers would be kept divided and therefore unable to form a union to get higher pay in the leather manufacturing plants. But the Greek and Turkish workers overcame their traditional prejudice against each other when they understood that prejudice was keeping them both down. When they did so, they got together and formed a union and have gained higher pay and better conditions as a result.

White and Negro workers can do the same thing. They will do it when they

understand how the poison brew of prejudice harms them both. Sensible trade unionists, progressives, and the American Labor Party are helping them towards that understanding, and this pamphlet is dedicated to that end.

We have seen that the Negro question is a part of the labor question and that the labor question grows out of the exploitation of the workers, whether they are white or black, whether they are Catholics, Protestants or Jews. Prejudice is in the picture because it makes it easier for the owning class to exploit the working class by keeping the workers divided and fighting among themselves.

Divided, they are prostrate before the power of the capitalist class. United they can get rid of exploitation and build a Cooperative Commonwealth of Labor for all who do useful work whatever their race, color, or creed.

#### Solving the Problem

How then can we tackle the question of getting rid of race prejudice and exploitation?

#### Not By Negro Racism and Anti-Semitism

First of all, we must clearly understand that there is no hope in building a Negro nationalist movement based on anti-white prejudice, opposed to the anti-Negro prejudice of too many white people in America. The proper fight of Negroes is against prejudice in all its forms, and for that fight we can properly demand and are now more and more getting, aid from the decent and sensible members of the white group. The struggle to build Negro prejudice against whites, or some special section of the white race such as the Jews, is not a solution. It is by genuine interracial organizations, and not by Negro nationalism, that the solution of the Negro problem must be sought. For in the long run the majority of the people in the United States are white; and a line-up of Negro against white is not likely to advance the cause of justice for Negroes or other racial minority groups.

#### Ownership and Management of Industry

The true source of human exploitation lies in the private ownership of natural resources and industries by the wealthy few. These few own the necessities of life in order to make profit at the expense of the needs and labor of their fellows. Therefore, to get rid of exploitation of the workers and unearned incomes for the owners, we must replace private ownership and management of industry and of our God-given natural resources with public ownership and democratic management. Instead of having our banks, mines, mills, factories, railroads, electric light and power plants, chain stores and big plantations run for the interests of the owners, so that they can exploit the workers and take a large part of the product of their labor, we will have industry owned by the people through the government and run for the benefit of all the people.

No one who is a good patriotic American could object to that. When the majority of Americans, Negro and white workers and farmers, today speak of "My Country," they utter a hope, not a fact. For the truth of the matter is that most of us who work do not own enough of "Our Country" to serve as a cemetery for a flea or a bed bug. "Our Country" will be ours when we own it and operate its industries and natural resources to meet the needs of all of us. Today, we do not even own our jobs. The boss can fire us any time he gets a cheaper worker or any time he can no longer make a big profit from our labor. The people who can truthfully speak of "My Country" are the Wall Street gang and the money trust, the cotton kings and railroad kings, the steel kings and automobile barons. It is their America, for it is they who own it, and by owning the country they also own the workers of the country.

When industry is owned by the people, it can and will be run for the good of the people. That means first of all that we will guarantee a job for everyone able and willing to work. We will even give the members of the capitalist class a chance to work, and that is something they do not do for us. We will produce things of good quality that people want and need. We will end the crazy situation that recently existed under capitalism where the government,

through the A.A.A., paid farmers not to produce, while millions of school children and adults are undernourished and half-starved, while millions more are poorly clad and wretchedly housed in overcrowded, ill-ventilated, and unsanitary shacks and tenements.

In a cooperative commonwealth, people would be born into economic and industrial rights, just as today we are all supposed to have certain civil and political rights. Today, we are all supposed to have the right of trial by jury (if you do not get lynched) and the right to vote (if you can pay your poll tax and, if a Negro, you do not try to vote in the Democratic primaries in the South). When industry is run for the people instead of the people being exploited for the benefit of the owners of industry, as is now the case, we will all then be guaranteed the right to a job, the right to the full social value of what we produce, the right to a decent and adequate pension for the veterans of industry, and even the right to have our children given a college education.

The difference between industry privately owned and operated for the profit of the exploiting class and public ownership of industry producing goods for the genuine welfare of the people, can best be illustrated by the following example: Today the owners of industry put in new machinery whenever they can profitably do so. They call it labor-saving machinery, but they do not install it to save labor. They use it to save the wages they pay to the workers. For example, if the owners of industry can get a new machine that enables one man to do the work which four or five used to do, each man does not have to work less hard. Not a bit of it. The owners of industry discharge three or four of them and make the remaining men work just as hard as before. They do not "save labor" but they save themselves from having to pay out as much in wages as they used to pay.

Of course those who get laid off receive no wages and thus their purchasing power is reduced or even destroyed; they cannot buy. Because they cannot buy, we have what is called "over-production" and "hard times" and still more unemployment. Of course, the trouble isn't over-production," instead it is "under-consumption." The workers do not get enough wages to enable them to buy back the full value of what they produced. Machinery today is actually a curse to the many millions of unemployed and the hungry, not because machinery is bad, but rather because the capitalist class use machinery for their own private advantage--to reduce labor costs and thus increase their profits.

Of course in a cooperative commonwealth industry will be run for the good of the people, and therefore, new machinery would mean that each man could produce much more goods and earn high wages. When the workers produce more and earn more, they can buy more and thus have a higher standard of living and avoid the curse of unemployment; or, the hours of labor could be reduced. Consequently, if more was produced in each hour everyone would work shorter hours *without a reduction in pay*. That, too, would avoid unemployment and at the same time increase leisure for education, for the appreciation of art and literature, the enjoyment of good music and for the development of a family life. In this way machinery would become a blessing to mankind. Machinery under such a system could be utilized to give every family an average income of \$5,000 a year and more, as still more machinery was invented and put to work as the iron slaves of all the people.

As more machinery is introduced under public ownership of industry for the good of all, we could lay off the old people, the veterans of industry, on a pension of \$200 or more a month. We would take the younger people off the streets and give them a good college education. And as still more machinery was invented we could give everybody two weeks' holiday with pay, maybe a month or more. In other words, we could then make machines the slaves of mankind, instead of the working class being enslaved to machinery by the capitalist class who today own the machines and thereby control the workers' jobs and lives.

#### The American Labor Party and the Negro

About 98 per cent of Negroes are industrial or agricultural workers. Therefore, any measures that will help the working class as a whole, will also benefit the entire Negro group. This is particularly true since Negro professional men are wholly and directly dependent on Negro workers and farmers, who are their clients, patients or pupils.

For instance, a more generous old age pension law as we advocate, will benefit all workers, but will especially benefit the Negro, because Negroes usually get lower wages than other workers; hence they are less able to save for old age. We also favor a more generous allowance under the unemployment insurance laws, and bringing domestic servants and farm laborers under these laws. Obviously, such changes will especially benefit Negroes. For, owing to the prejudice existing among many employers, Negro workers are the first to be fired and the last to be hired. With more generous and more inclusive unemployment insurance to cushion the deprivations of joblessness, the savage and relentless competition between white and Negro workers for the limited number of jobs available under capitalism would be softened. The antagonisms resulting from such competition would eventually die out. And the same general rule applies to the various other measures that the American Labor Party favors for the immediate benefit of workers and farmers. The Negro group will be benefited to a greater degree than other workers.

The leading members of the American Labor Party have been very active in helping workers, whether agricultural, industrial, or white collared to organize into genuine unions. In the day by day battles of labor for higher pay and shorter hours, against discrimination and all sorts of chiseling by employers, unions are the most effective weapons of the working class. Only by organizing can the workers protect themselves against unfair discharge, against lay-offs, against low wages and long hours of work. Unions are necessary in order that workers can get from the introduction of labor displacing devices the benefits of higher wages and shorter hours in accord with the increased output per worker which such devices make possible. Unions are also the beginnings of industrial democracy. They are a much needed curb on the absolute autocracy of the boss over the livelihood of his "hands," as he contemptuously calls his workers when he is talking to other bosses. If you have a strong union you become a citizen of the industry instead of a subject of the boss.

In order to maintain their absolute industrial autocracy over the lives and livelihood of their workers and tenants, the capitalists and plantation owners try as far as they can to deny to the workers political democracy, and deprive them of their right to vote. In the South they especially deny to Negroes the right to vote in the Democratic primaries. Thus they effectively disfranchise us, for the Democrats have unquestioned control of the Southern States. They also disfranchise most of the poor white workers and farm hands by making them pay a poll tax before they can vote.

On the other hand, the workers while fighting for industrial democracy, practice political democracy within their own unions. Consequently, Negro members of the International Longshoremen's Association, The United Mine Workers of America, The International Ladies Garment Workers Union and other unions in the South, as well as the North, enjoy the right to vote for union officials, as well as the right to participate in decisions affecting wages and work conditions. Thus, while Negro and poor white workers and farmers of the South have been disfranchised by the owning class through the Republican and Democratic politicians who serve the rich, the very same Negro and white workers and tenant farmers when organized enjoy truly democratic rights and privileges in their unions.

This policy, pursued by the American Labor Party, of equal rights for all whatever their race, creed, or color, is not founded merely on noble sentiment. It is founded also on sound common sense and upon the stern dictates of self interest, and is thus stronger on that account.

The job of winning concessions in wages and hours and preventing arbitrary discharge by the boss is a gigantic one. The employer, of course, starts with financial resources immeasurably superior to anything that the workers can possibly muster, either singly or together. Such resources enable him to comb the country for scabs, to offer temporarily high pay to such scabs, to influence public opinion, and to plant spies or *agents provocateurs* among the ranks of the workers, as is amply proved by the investigation of LaFollette's senatorial committee on civil liberties. The worker on his part when he goes on strike, cannot afford to travel too far hunting another job to keep his family fed while the strike lasts, and if he did, he could only find a job at the present time if he were extremely lucky.

Even more important, the corporate or individual owner of industry has the right to hire and fire, the power to promote and demote. At present, this legal

right to give and withhold employment means in actual practice the right to condemn a man and his family to the tender mercies of the public welfare relief. It constitutes a tremendously powerful economic club in the hands of the owners of industry which is not adequately balanced by any similar club in the hands of the workers, no matter how strongly and completely organized they may be.

Added to all this preponderance of economic power on the side of the employer in any wage contract between the owners of industry and unorganized workers, is the fact that in nearly every case where the workers are trying to establish a union in an industry and locality where unions have not been recognized and dealt with by the employer before, as is the case in many parts of the South, the state and local authorities are on the side of the employer in any economic conflict. The police and local public officials may, therefore, be counted on confidently to be vigorous in protecting the scabs, and lackadaisical in preserving the right to picket or in forcing upon recalcitrant employers the duty of bargaining collectively.

To overcome all this heaped-up economic and political power, the workers can only rely on the solidarity of labor. *Unless this solidarity embraces all workers, whatever their race, national origin, or color, the chance of union victory in any labor struggle is slim indeed.*

Sensible white and Negro trade unionists know this, and whatever their personal feelings may be, insist on equal rights for all national and racial groups within the union covering the working force of any industry.

So strong is the force of the argument that equal standing and just treatment for Negro and other racial groups in the union will strengthen the power of that union, that the A.F. of L. has repeatedly declared itself, through convention resolutions, against racial discrimination in unions, although it must be admitted that the A.F. of L. central body, in actual practice, has done nothing to discipline such unions as the machinists, who do openly draw the color line. Since the International Ladies Garment Workers has joined the A.F. of L., we can reasonably expect to see the forces in the A.F. of L. which are fighting race prejudice greatly strengthened, since the I.L.G.W.U. has an honorable and consistent record of opposing all forms of prejudice among its members.

The newer unions, such as those affiliated with the C.I.O., and the recent recruits which the C.I.O. unions have gained in industries such as steel and automobiles, have been particularly strong in their opposition to any racial discrimination among their membership. The C.I.O. in the steel industry, for example, was and is vigorous in opposing any tendency toward discrimination, so much so that Negroes in numerous instances furnish officials for the local unions in a larger proportion than they furnish members among the rank and file. The C.I.O. in meat packing, likewise, is free from race prejudice.

In the Birmingham district, despite the general Southern attitude toward the colored group, the unions formed in the mass production industries are relatively free from discrimination. This is so despite an active campaign by at least some of the employers' representatives to prevent unionization by an appeal to race prejudice. As a result, Negro union members can vote as trade unionists on problems affecting their jobs and livelihood, when they are in practice effectively denied the right to vote as citizens for government offices. In striving together for a goal beneficial to both, Negro and white workers forget the prejudice which every institution in that section of the country has fostered and encouraged.

It should therefore appear clear, that in the long run, the best attack on the segregation which is the mother of prejudice is through organizations which seek for larger groups, including both whites and Negroes, economic advantage for the group as a whole. Unions are an excellent example of such organizations, especially the more vigorous and progressive unions such as those in the American Labor Party.

Unfortunately, race prejudice so permeates white America that hardly any important group is free from it. Unions are more nearly free of race prejudice than most groups composed chiefly of white people. But the color bar still exists in some unions. Members of the American Labor Party are active in trying to break it down.

## True Freedom

We seek to make all workers and farmers understand that in this fight for True Freedom, which will end exploitation and secure justice for all who toil, prejudice is but the poison gas employed by their class enemies. Both the prejudice of the whites, and the suspicions of the Negroes, must be rooted from the hearts of all, so that the working class can more effectively fight for justice and freedom. As the workers learn to stand shoulder to shoulder in a genuine brotherhood of all who toil, they can make greater progress and insure the success of their joint efforts.

The Cooperative Commonwealth will be the liberator of labor and the hope of all mankind. Already it gives inspiration to millions of workers of all races in all lands. It has enabled these millions to understand that their interests are not bound up with the interests of the exploiters of labor, the greedy masters of our economic and industrial life. The American Labor Party and similar organizations are teaching the landless, jobless and moneyless millions of mankind to have confidence in the irresistible power of the educated working class, enlightened and united to make a better world and win for themselves and their children the right to life, liberty and happiness.

We call upon workers, Negro and white, skilled and unskilled, to unite in the battle against poverty, against war, against human exploitation, against race prejudice, against all that stands in the way of human brotherhood and a noble life. The struggle to win these goals is a glorious struggle and for the greatest prize beings can ever strive for in this world. In this struggle, the color line with all its prejudice and segregation, its discrimination and lynching must go. Racial and national hatreds must be wiped out. The workers must close up their ranks. They must no longer divide and dissipate their strength between two parties, owned by their masters. They must unite in a Party of their own, a Party of all who do useful work, regardless of race, creed or color--The American Labor Party.

Workers of the Negro race! Workers of all races! Ours is the choice. Shall we who feed the world, who clothe the world, who house the world, forever remain contented Pariahs, dispossessed and despoined in the very world we have built by our labors of brain and brawn through the centuries? Shall we forever remain content with poverty in the midst of plenty, while the hell of war and fascism smother our souls and break our bodies? Or shall we rise together, gird our loins, and fight for ourselves, for our class, for the right to live, to enjoy a life of peace, plenty and true freedom?

We must choose! Our fate rests in our own hands. JOIN your union! JOIN your Party--The American Labor Party--and together let us go forward from victory to victory until we conquer the world for labor and establish the cooperative commonwealth--the Brotherhood of all mankind wherein true freedom, freedom from poverty, unemployment, exploitation, race prejudice, and war will be the rightful heritage of all who render useful service to society.

Frank R. Crosswaith and Alfred B. Lewis, *Negro and White Labor Unite for True Freedom* (New York: Negro Labor News Service, 1935), pp. 14-15, 21, 25-27, 29-36, 44-47, 49-56, 57-58.

BEN FLETCHER AND THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD<sup>95</sup>

13. I.W.W. MEANS "I WON'T WORK," SHOUTS GEO. C. HALL AT BROOKLYN<sup>96</sup>

Riots Are the Results of the Lack of Law and Order  
Enforcement Explains the Eminent Surgeon

Brooklyn, N.Y. Feb. 2.--"The churches of Chicago did more to stop the co-



called race riots there than the police and the State militia ever could have done," declared Dr. George C. Hall, of that city, in an address before the Brooklyn Urban League's annual meeting at the First Presbyterian Church. Dr. Hall is one of the committee appointed by the Governor of Illinois to investigate the recent riots in Chicago. His talk was on "The Negro and the Community."<sup>97</sup>

"The riots and the results of the riots arose from the neglect of law and order," he said. "Because a few of us go wrong there is no reason for blaming the whole group. We know this Government and its Constitution stand for a square deal for all and that its principles are the best of any nation on the face of the globe. We have always shown our loyalty and our I.W.W. stands for 'I Want Work' and nothing else."

"The Negro went to France and made the same sacrifices for democracy as did the white boys, and I believe he has paid the price for admission to the big show."

"I want my people to have confidence in the American people and the American people to have confidence in us. We have adapted ourselves to the conditions in which we have been compelled to live, and want people of America to learn more of the ideals and thoughts of the American Negro. It would be a terrible thing if some morning one twelfth of the population of this country should run amuck. We must understand and help each other."

Alexander L. Jackson, educational secretary for the league and a graduate of Harvard, talked on the "Spirit of the Urban League Movement." He declared the problem of today was the ignorance of one group of the other and that by improving the condition of the Negro the condition of the community as a whole would be improved. He declared the time has come when the colored people should come into their own, not as colored people, but as American citizens; also that if the two groups began to learn more of each other in early life the matter would be greatly simplified.

Robert J. Elzy, executive secretary of the league, read a report on the year's work and said he was satisfied there had been a great improvement over the year 1918. One of the main activities was the housing situation. The conditions in the poorer sections were very bad and unfit places to bring up children were numerous.

*The Birmingham Reporter*, February 7, 1920.

#### 14. COLORED AND WHITE WORKERS SOLVING THE RACE PROBLEM FOR PHILADELPHIA

In the city of the Quakers, the Southern bugaboo--the contact of Negro and white peoples, has been routed by the plain, unvarnished workers. In the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union, No. 8, there are 3,500 men, three-fifths of whom are Negroes. During the war there were more than six thousand men in the organization.

Despite the affiliation of Local 8 with the I.W.W., no attempt was made during the war to destroy the organization, doubtless due, so it is rumored among the men, to the recognition by the boss stevedores of the fact that the union had the power to tie up the port of Philadelphia.

Another signal achievement to which the men point with great pride is that no mishaps, as explosions of any kind, occurred in their port--one of the largest and most important ports in the country, during the war, from which munitions and various materials of war were shipped to the Allies. Yet, malicious propagandists have sought to stigmatize these men as "anarchists" and "bomb throwers."

Again, the organization has been the lever with which the men have raised their wages from 25 cents to 80 cents and \$1.20 per hour. They have also established union conditions on the job. They have overthrown monarchy in the transport industry of Philadelphia, and set up a certain form of industrial democracy, in that the boss stevedores and the delegates of the union confer to adjust differences that arise between the longshoremen and the shipping interests. This is quite a long way from the day when the boss stevedores hired and fired, and reduced wages without let-up or hindrance. Then chaos reigned on the water front. The longshoremen had no power because they had no organization.

## The Color Bar in Unions

One effective way to break down the color bar in unions is to increase the number of Negro trade unionists so that their votes and influence will count more and more heavily in the central labor unions, the state federations of labor, and the American Federation of Labor, and in the C.I.O. and its subordinate parts as well. Accordingly, unionists in the American Labor Party, both white and Negro, have substantially aided every effort of the Negro workers to organize. The present head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Mr. A. Philip Randolph, is a member of the American Labor Party. Mr. Frank R. Crosswaith, one of the authors of this pamphlet, and now a General Organizer of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, was one of the first organizers of the Pullman Porters Union and, at present, is Chairman of the Negro Labor Committee. As far back as 1925 he organized the Negro motion picture operators in Harlem and led a successful fight against the color bar that existed in the Motion Picture Machine Operators Union. He was likewise the moving spirit in setting up the Harlem Labor Center--"Labor's home in Harlem." This headquarters for the trade union life of Harlem was made possible only through the cooperation of progressive trade unionists, both white and colored, in New York City.

The International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, whose members in New York take a leading part in the American Labor Party, has been very active from its very beginning in organizing the Negro workers in its field. In that union Negroes enjoy absolute equality with their white fellow members. This is also true of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. The United Mine Workers of America, one of the most powerful unions in the United States, has many thousands of Negro members. Negro and white longshoremen of the Gulf ports have participated in a strike shoulder to shoulder on the docks, conducted by the International Longshoremen's Association, which is a comparatively conservative labor organization, has contributed a stirring example of interracial solidarity to the history of race relationships in America.

Bogalusa, La., was the headquarters of the Great Southern Lumber Company, whose sawmill is one of the largest in the world. In 1919 the company tried to use unorganized Negro workers to defeat white workers who had formed a union. Here is the story of what happened:

"The forces of labor, however, began to organize the Negroes in the employ of the company, which held political as well as capitalistic control in the community. The company then began to have Negroes arrested on charges of vagrancy, taking them before the city court and having them fined and turned over to the company to work out the fines under the guard of a gunman. In the troubles that came to a head on November 22, three white men were shot and killed, one of them being the District President of the American Federation of Labor, who was helping to give protection to a colored organizer."<sup>98</sup>

This is a glorious example of the common understanding and solitariness between white and Negro workers against their common enemy which Negro and white trade unionists must develop and extend. If each of us would pledge to do the utmost to expand that understanding and solidarity between the workers of both races through the North and the South and into every nook and cranny of the land, the day of labor's liberation would be hastened. Such class brotherhood will eventually root out prejudice from our social life, and finally weld the members of both groups in a solid, steel-like army fighting for justice for all who toil.

Probably the most significant and successful attempt that is being made anywhere today to get effective common action for a common cause between white and Negro workers is the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Despite the evil seeds of prejudice and suspicion which for two centuries the plantation owners and their agents had sowed among the equally oppressed farm hands of both races, a union was built in which both races cooperated on terms of absolute equality for their common advancement.<sup>99</sup>

Because of the courage, hard work and solidarity of its members, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union has been able to make substantial gains in Arkansas and Southeastern Missouri, where it was most strongly organized. For the first time in Dixie, white and colored farm laborers, who constitute some of the lowest paid and most cruelly exploited workers in the entire United States struck together to elevate their common low level of life on the cotton plantations there.

"But, times have changed," so one of the men assured us with a twinkle of triumph in his eyes; seeming at the same time to imply that they would never again return to the old conditions.

"We have no distinctions in this union"--another vouchsafed, "Everybody draws the same wage, even to the waterboy."

At this time, our interesting confab with the different workers standing around in the hall, was abruptly cut short by a sharp rap of a gavel reenforced by a husky voice, calling for order. Men were seen, in different parts of the hall scamping for seats. As we turned and looked to the front of the hall, we observed two workers, one black and one white, seated upon a platform. We inquired of their functions, and were informed that the colored worker was the chairman and the white worker the secretary.

The chairman was direct and positive and yet not intolerant. The meeting proceeded smoothly, interrupted here and there with some incoherent remarks, giving evidence that John Barleycorn was not dead. This was taken good-naturedly, however, as the worker, in question, was known as a good union man.

The most interesting phase of this meeting was the report of a committee on a movement to segregate the Negroes into a separate union. Strange, to say, this move came from alleged intelligent Negroes outside of the union, who have heretofore cried down the white union workers on the ground that they excluded Negroes from their unions.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that the white workers were as violent as the Negroes in condemning this idea of segregation. All over the hall murmurs were heard, "I'll be damned if I'll stand for anybody to break up this organization," "It's the bosses trying to divide us," "We've been together this long and we will be together on."

Finally a motion was passed to adopt a program of action of propaganda and publicity to counteract this nefarious propaganda to wreck the organization upon the rocks of race prejudice.

Here was the race problem being worked out by black and white workers. They have built up a powerful organization--an organization which has been the foundation of a good living for the men. Many a man told us that he had been able to maintain his children in high school on the wages Local 8 had secured for him, and at the thought of anyone attacking the organization, his eyes flashed--a hissing fire of hate--regarding such an attack as an attack upon his life and the lives of his wife and children.

Colored workers told us, too, that they remember when a colored man could not walk along the waterfront, so high was the feeling running between the races. But, now all races work on the water-front. Negro families live all through that section. It is a matter of common occurrence for Negroes and white workers to combine against a white or a black scab.

And the organization, Local 8 of the Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union did it all! The white and black workers were then pulling together. Why should they now pull apart? What they have done, they can do, and even more, if only the workers of races realize that their power lies in solidarity--which is achieved through industrial organization.

*The Messenger*, 3 (July, 1921): 214-15.

#### 15. THE FORUM OF LOCAL 8

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 p.m. sharp. Immediately the gavel sounded, a hall of six or seven hundred eager-eyed workers doffed their hats and sat up erect--a picture of attention, interest and enthusiasm. It was the beginning of an innovation among workers.

It was a conscious and deliberate effort of the Marine Transport Workers to conduct a systematic forum for self-education.

Rumors had been floating in the air about the rise of a dual union. It had been reported that agents of the I.L.A. were operating along the water-front, seeking to sow the seeds of discord and dissension among the rank and file of the organization. Alleged Negro leaders masquerading in the guise of race loyalty, had been preaching the nefarious and dangerous doctrine of race

segregation to the Negro members of Local 8. Negroes were made all sorts of fictitious and fraudulent promises about their receiving sick and death benefits. To these sugar-coated, empty and unsubstantial pledges, the militant, class-conscious and intelligent Negro workers turned a deaf ear. They meted out to the self-styled and self-appointed I.L.A. saviors of the Negro workers, curses instead of blessings.

It was to reenforce and fortify the brains of Local 8 that this forum was organized. Only those men of the organization were deceived by the notorious misrepresentation of the paid agents of the bosses who were "strong in the back and weak in the head." But always alert, active and conscious of its class interests, Local 8 proceeded to formulate plans to break down the insidious, anti-labor solidarity propaganda of the I.L.A.

The subject of the lecture of the first meeting was "The Relation of Organized Labor to Race Riots."

The speaker attempted to show that inasmuch as labor fights race riots just as it fights the wars between nations, only labor could stop race riots. He pointed out that just as the bosses of the workers profit from national wars, so the bosses of the workers profit from race wars; that it was to the interest of the capitalists to keep the workers divided upon race lines so that they could rob them more easily and successfully. He stated that: *"If the white and black working days are kept fighting over the bone of race prejudice, the artful, hypocritical yellow capitalist dog will steal up and grab the meat of profit."* It was explained how race riots served the interests of the employers of labor, by keeping the workers divided, at daggers points. He indicated how the I.L.A. was serving the interests of the Stevedores and Shipping Interests by preaching a *race-riot doctrine of segregation*.

Brief, pointed and enthusiastic questions and discussions followed the lecture.

There was an evident passion to talk among the fellow workers. The forum afforded them an ideal opportunity to vent their grievances against the I.L.A. and the entire tribe of anti-labor forces in the country.

Although the verbs and nouns seldom lay down in harmony and peace, the clear economic thinking of the fellow workers was marvelous and evident to any one.

Each speaker deplored and condemned the Tulsa race riot in Oklahoma. With a sound working-class instinct they laid the cause of the Tulsa massacres at the door of the labor-hating, profiteering, conscienceless Ku Klux Klan, predatory business interests of the South.

Here, too, was a living example of the ability of white and black people to work, live and conduct their common affairs side by side. There were black and white men and black and white women in this meeting. No rapes, no lynchings, no race riots occurred! Isn't it wonderful! Let the Southern press together with its northern, eastern and western journalistic kith and kin, bent upon their base, corrupt, wicked and hateful mission of poisoning the wells of public opinion with the virulent spleen of race prejudice, take note!

The second forum meeting discussed the interesting subject of "Labor Preparedness for the Next War." "Industrial Unionism, the Only Hope of the Workers" provided an enthusiastic and lively discussion. John Barleycorn wormed his way into the stomach of one fellow and upset his head, thereby necessitating a discussion of the "Relation of Liquor to the Labor Movement." Searching and discerning questions on the economics of the Prohibition Movement were hurled at the speaker. "Was the abolition of the liquor industry which increased unemployment to the interest of the workers?" was asked. The speaker answered that, "there was no more reason for advocating the sale of liquor, a recognized poison, on the ground that it afforded employment to workers than there was to advocate war, or the building of houses of prostitution on the grounds that such would afford employment to the workers."

This meeting was followed by a lecture on the "Open Shop Campaign--the Remedy: Trades or Industrial Unionism."

The Forum meets every Friday evening in Philadelphia.

Here the workers are trying to democratize knowledge, for they, too, are learning that knowledge is power and that if the capitalists control all the knowledge, they will also control the world.

## 16. THE TASK OF LOCAL 8--THE MARINE TRANSPORT WORKERS OF PHILADELPHIA

Labor, the world over, is faced with the task of rescuing humanity from the wreck of capitalism. In England, France, Italy, Germany, and America, the laboring element are the chief victims of the impasse, precipitated in industry, by the present masters of the world.

The industries, built up by labor and operated for the production of social necessities, are now idle. As a result of the inability of the high priests of capitalism to carry on production without interruption, unemployment, want and misery blight the lives of millions of willing workers in every land where the system of private ownership in the social tools of production, obtains.

For the work of taking over the business of running the world, the toilers need to prepare. In every country, and in every industry, the workers are confronted with the task of preparing themselves. This is the most immediate phase of their work. To this task, be it said to the credit of the Industrial Workers of the World, Research Bureaus have been established. Their purpose is to investigate the processes of industries, such as mining, manufacturing, feeding, shipping, railroading, banking, farming, etc.--with a view to placing, at the convenience of labor, a body of scientific knowledge essential to an efficient control, operation and management of the world's work.

The plan of scientific-knowledge-research-bureaus is a direct and necessary outgrowth of the industrial union form of organization. In an industrial democracy, the industry will naturally form the unit of society, and, hence, a knowledge of its organization, processes, and technique of management becomes, at once, the primary prerequisite to those in whose charge the industrial mechanism will fall. In anticipation of the trend of the industrial life of the world, labor unions, in all of the various countries are turning their attention to problems of industrial control, operation, and management. In England, the recognition by the workers of the need for greater knowledge of the machinery of production and exchange is manifest in their development of the "shop stewards' movement." In Germany, Italy and France similar movements are in process of development.

As a result of this new urge for knowledge, workers' colleges, papers and magazines, forums and churches, have grown up. They are mobilizing an army of educators to conduct their educational efforts. The class struggle has, at last, driven the proletariat to see that education, organization and agitation must go hand in hand, and that not until the workers have achieved a workingclass solidarity based upon scientific knowledge, will they seriously struggle for emancipation. This, of course, does not mean that each worker must be a political economist, but it does mean that the workers must understand the nature of the class organization of society; they must realize what a menace to the interests of the workers, divisions upon race, religion, color, sex, nationality and trade, constitute. Needless to say, that economic understanding must come both from the struggle between labor and capital, and the conscious educational efforts of organized labor. For a long time labor has received its training, in toto, from the school of industrial war, and such was the logical and inevitable thing to happen; for the material conditions of strife and conflict alone could effectively convince the workers of the necessity of their employing the same weapons of offense and defense that are employed by the employing class. A capitalist press, school, forum, church, stage and screen can only be counteracted by a labor press, school, forum, church, stage and screen. As capitalists are organized upon the basis of the industry and the several industries are integrated, and centralized into One Big Union of Capital, so labor must organize upon the basis of the industry and integrate and centralize its industrial units into One Big Union. This logic, of course, applies to questions of race, color, religion, trade, sex and nationality. The masters of the economic life of the country, or the world for that matter, are organized without regard to race, color, religion, sex or nationality. They fan and enkindle the sinister flames of religious, race, color and nationality prejudice in order that the poor, gullible, credulous, well-meaning but misguided "Henry Dubbs"--the slaves, will fly at each others' throats, for while they, the workers, fight among themselves, the Bosses rob them all.

To offset the separation tendency among the workers, the Marine Transport

Workers of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, have entered the vanguard of American labor. When the spirit of race prejudice between the black and white workers, on the waterfront in Philadelphia first manifested itself, Local 8 proceeded to conduct an educational campaign in leaflets and forum lectures. This forum was attended largely by both black and white workers. The lecture course covered a wide range of subjects, touching upon national and international topics. The questions and discussions from the floor were pointed, well put and intelligent. Chiefly the economic aspect of the topics discussed, was stressed by the workers.

The leaflets which were issued by the organization dealt with some subject vital to the interests of the workers. Local 8 is working out the methods in its special industry which will equip the toilers for the task of workers control and management. No finer spirit of brotherhood can be found anywhere than exists in the organization. Upon entering the hall, during meetings, one is met with the fact of a Negro chairman and a white secretary sitting side by side conducting the meeting. From the floor, white and colored workers rise, make themselves heard, make motions, argue questions pro and con, have their differences and settle them, despite the Imperial Wizard Colonel William Joseph Simmons' and Marcus Garvey's "Race First" bogey. At picnics, the workers also mingle, fraternize, dance, eat and play together. Nor do the Negro workers dance, eat and play only among themselves; but both white and black men, white and black women, and white and black children eat, play and dance together just as they work and hold their meetings together.

Local 8 is setting the example which labor groups throughout the country must emulate if the Ku Klux Klan which is behind Tulsas, is to be destroyed, and if the Open Shop campaign is to fail.

THE MESSENGER and its editors have been trying to spread this "Brotherhood" propaganda among the white and black workers, wherever and whenever possible. Glad to say, the Marine Transport Workers is one of the few labor organizations which has given whole-hearted support, moral and financial.

When the workers, in America, are able to build local 8's in every section of the country, the 100 per centers, the Open Shoppers, the combined manufacturers and capitalists of America, will not dare to institute an assault upon labor in the guise of the "American Plan."<sup>100</sup>

*The Messenger* 3 (October, 1921): 262-63.

## 17. A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

On July 16, 1916, I left the office in Philadelphia and went to work as a longshoreman and worked most of the time on ammunition and powder, general cargo for Murphy, Cook & Co., and sometimes on lumber, to which I can get many members to testify. There have been no explosions on the docks of Philadelphia or on any ships out of that port and all the ammunition was loaded by members of the I.W.W. and there were no guards on the docks. The head foreman, called "Billboro," can testify to my work as a longshoreman. Besides there are many members who can testify to my position in regard to Germany and the war.

As I stated before Honorable Judge K. M. Landis before sentence was passed, I know of no conspiracy and if there had been a conspiracy against the government then explosions and obstructions would have taken place. But there were none. We had lots of members on the Panama Line, which is under government control, and there was no trouble. Besides the members liked to work on those boats and no time was lost on any trips. The Bulletins testify to this, I think. The Bulletins were published in "Solidarity," I think, and "Solidarity" was introduced as evidence.

I was arrested on September 29, 1917, about 8 o'clock in the morning at home, having just returned from work for Murphy, Cook & Co., at Wilmington, Delaware. The federal officers were at the house Friday night, about half an hour after I had left, and were asking for me. I read in the paper the following morning that Doree was arrested and that others were looked for. I got off at West Philadelphia station, where I always get off going home, and

was told that I was wanted. I then started to wash and get breakfast when U.S. Deputy Marshal McDevitt came in and told me to come with him. Had no one come when I finished my breakfast then I would have gone to the Federal Building myself.

After being released on bonds I went to work again on the waterfront and worked two days when we were told we had to go to Chicago to appear there. When we got there we were told that we were not wanted, that it was a mistake.

In the evidence on the General Executive Board, presented by the prosecution, I am on the list for prospective secretary-treasurer of the I.W.W., and it looks as if I were convicted on this account, and will state that I have never known of it as I was not notified by Wm. D. Haywood at any time. I have never been consulted in this respect. It was a complete surprise to me.<sup>101</sup>

Now I will state that the federal officers took several copies of "The Deadly Parallel" from the store room at Philadelphia. When these leaflets were received I never sent any away as I did not agree with the comparison made with the A.F. of L., but believed that there should have been a comparison made, from the standpoint of principle, to the German Social Democrats on the Sub-Socialist Congress. The declaration of the I.W.W. was made before the A.F. of L. declaration and not in comparison with the A.F. of L. declaration.

There were no pamphlets of Gustave Herve's in Philadelphia. We never had any there and would not handle them. The records should show that there never were any.

Now, in regard to strikes, I have stated before Honorable Judge K. M. Landis that there were none to oppose the government that I know of and would not take part in any. There were small strikes, however, along the coast. When I came to the East in December, 1916, there were strikes almost continually on boats in the different ports for more wages, some asking for a 25 per cent bonus, some 50 per cent, 75 per cent and others 100 per cent of wages paid. The members of the International Seamen's Union were talking of striking in the spring for a raise in wages. The increase in the cost of living made a raise necessary. The shipping companies, refusing to recognize a union, made a chronic condition that union men were fired when non-union men could be secured. This brought on strikes, one after another, all winter of 1916 and 1917. In order to stop this I had written to Norfolk and other places that a \$10.00 flat raise would be better than continually one crew after another asking for different bonuses, and would be more lasting in the long run, besides it would be best for an organization of labor.

On about April 10th or 20th, 1917, I wired to the different ports to ask for \$110.00 flat increase on all ships, as members in Boston were already on strike for a \$10.00 raise and they got it. This was practically settled. Then on May 1 the International Seamen's Union asked for a \$15.00 raise, \$60.00 a month, and we then asked for \$60.00 a month also. This second raise was forced by the International Seamen's Union of the A.F. of L. and was for better conditions and not to oppose any government.

During the latter part of August, 1917, I was called to Boston by the members of Boston to try and help settle a strike there. I was in Boston four days and appeared before a state official at the Capitol Building, and no settlement could be effected. I left the next day and went to work again in Philadelphia on the waterfront. James Phillips may know the names and can testify to this. This strike was not to oppose any government. There were no other strikes to my knowledge during war time and absolutely none in opposition to the war program.

There is one other matter. I heard a telegram read by Honorable Judge K. M. Landis, dated August 4, 1917, to someone in Arizona, stating that the lumber workers and agricultural workers were on a general strike and that the *M.T.W. reports action*. This is as big a surprise to me as the news that I was on the list for secretary-treasurer in case Haywood should be arrested. I was not in the office in Philadelphia from July 16, 1917, except to visit there three or four times, and do not know of any strike which should have taken place nor of anyone taking any steps to call a strike. I know that I would not have approved of such a strike.

This is about all I can think of now. In conclusion I wish to state that I have been found guilty and given a sentence as follows:

Six years and a fine of \$5,000 on the first count;  
Ten years and a fine of \$5,000 on the second count;  
Two years and a fine of \$5,000 on the third count;

Twenty years and a fine of \$5,000 on the fourth count.

All the above sentences to run concurrently, making it a twenty-year sentence in the Federal Prison at Leavenworth, Kansas, and a \$20,000 fine.

I feel that I am absolutely innocent of obstructing the federal government and the state government in the prosecution of the war program, military or otherwise.

If I have to serve, in view of the foregoing, twenty years in prison for obstructing or even having in mind to obstruct the government, then I can go to the penitentiary with a clear conscience of being "Not Guilty" and being innocent of the charges I was convicted on.

Walter T. Nef.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

vs.

HAYWOOD, et al.

*The Messenger*, 3 (November, 1921): 282-83.

#### 18. A CALL TO SOLIDARITY!!

Local 8 of the Marine Transport Workers of Philadelphia, affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World, call to the workers of all races, creeds, color and nationality to Unite.

If we would maintain our standard of living, and prepare for the final emancipation of the workers, we must organize our labor power upon an industrial basis.

We are the only organization in America which has a uniform wage for engineers, holemen, truckers, riggers, and water boys.

Of our three thousand and five hundred members, over two thousand are Negroes.

In this period of industrial depression and black reaction, only solidarity can save the workers.

Let workers of all races, creed, color and nationality, organize to liberate the class-war and political prisoners. Let us organize to build up a new Brotherhood for mankind where there is no race, class, craft, religious or nationality distinctions.

Workers: Organize, Agitate, Educate, Emancipate!

MARINE TRANSPORT WORKERS  
INDUSTRIAL UNION, NO. 8

Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.)  
121 Catherine Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

*The Messenger*, 4 (February, 1922): 360.

#### 19. LONGSHOREMEN FIGHTING FOR LIFE

On the water front in Philadelphia and Portland, an intense and desperate contest is being waged by the I.W.W.'s to preserve a decent standard of living and to save their organizations from the savage and brutal assaults of the hypocritical and frightened Stevedores, the powerful steamship interests. In these struggles, be it said to the credit and honor of the I.W.W., the Negroes and whites are fighting shoulder to shoulder for more milk for their babies



and to keep the wolf from their door, as well as to defend their organization which has been the very prop of their lives.

One great asset to the strikers is that they are industrially organized. Even the waterboy is taken into the organization for they have learned that it is impossible for labor to win while one part is scabbing on the other part, when a fight is on.

The MESSENGER bids you to hold out and hold on.

*The Messenger*, 4 (December, 1922): 538.

## 20. PHILADELPHIA WATERFRONT'S UNIONISM

By Ben Fletcher

*The most prominent Negro Labor Leader in America*

### The Philadelphia Longshoremen Become an Independent Union

During the month of May, 1913, the Longshoremen of Philadelphia went on strike and re-entered the Labor Movement after an absence of 15 years. A few days after their strike began against those intolerable conditions and low wages always imposed upon the unorganized workers, representatives of both the Marine Transport Workers' Union of the I.W.W. and the International Longshoremen's Union of the A.F.L. got before them and presented their various arguments favoring the Philadelphia Longshoremen's affiliation. At a mass meeting they made their choice, deciding to organize into the I.W.W. and by May 20th had become an integral part of that organization.

After nine years' identification with the I.W.W. they have been forced to sever their connections with that organization in order to prevent the annihilation of their local autonomy by that unreasonable and inefficient Centralism that has grown upon the I.W.W. since 1916. Since that year innumerable assaults have been made by both the Central Administration of the Marine Transport Workers and the Central Administration of the I.W.W. upon their right to determine the local administration of the Union's affairs. Unacquainted in a practical way with the problems arising from a job-controlling organization, numbering 3,000 members; "Foot Loose Wobblies" from the I.W.W. Western jurisdiction, by abusing the I.W.W. Universal Transfer System, sought to (and sometimes succeeded) acquire a determining voice and vote on any question relating to Local job or Financial matters.

Repeatedly the I.W.W. General Administration has attempted to force the Philadelphia Marine Transport Workers' Union to remit to the Marine Transport Workers' Central office, weekly, all net income balances above \$100 and to confine all expenditures to those "permitted." Needless to state the organization consistently refused to do so. Last Fall the "Foot Loose Wobblies" succeeded in stampeding the Union into an insane attempt to wrest from the U.S. Shipping Board and Private Steamship and Stevedoring Interests the 44-hour week single handed. Immediately upon the collapse of the strike a representative of the I.W.W.'s General Administration appeared before a regular business meeting of the Philadelphia Longshoremen and delivered the following ultimatum: "You must strictly comply with the Constitution of the I.W.W. and remit all funds except a \$100, or so from now on to the Central Office, or by the authority vested in the General Executive Board your charter will be annulled and your funds seized."

Pursuant to a motion under new business, steps were taken immediately to safeguard all property and funds of the Union. Last month (April) the organization of the Longshoremen in Philadelphia became a duly chartered Independent Union, known as the Philadelphia Longshoremen's Union. As heretofore it will embrace in One Union any and all workers engaged in the Marine Transport Industry.

The history of the Philadelphia Longshoremen's connection with the I.W.W. is one of unswerving loyalty to its fundamental principles. Some have died while hundreds of others have been jailed as its standard bearers in order to

vindicate its cause. At no time during this connection was it necessary to appeal for outside aid to meet the expense incurred in defending its jailed militants. Into the coffers of the I.W.W. the Philadelphia Longshoremen dumped \$50,000 in per capita tax alone during their affiliation, organization assessments, relief, defense and miscellaneous contributions in proportion.

Notwithstanding, the I.W.W. was not able in that period of time with that amount of finance at their disposal to organize one supporting job control port. The Philadelphia Longshoremen are of the opinion that they and they alone can rebuild their organization, just as it was they and they alone who did the trick in the past. They are confident that the organizing of the waterfront workers strictly upon the basis of and in conformity with their class interests will eventually overcome all the slander, baseless charges and race baiting now being propagated with avidity by those who were once loudest in their praise and boast of our power and righteousness.

*The Messenger*, 5 (June, 1923): 740-41.

## 21. THE NEGRO AND ORGANIZED LABOR

By Ben Fletcher

In these United States of America, the history of the Organized Labor Movement's attitude and disposition toward the Negro Section of the world of Industry is replete with gross indifference and, excepting a few of its component parts, is a record of complete surrender before the color line. Directed, manipulated, and controlled by those bent on harmonizing the diametrically opposed interests of Labor and Capital, it is for the most part not only a "bulwark against" Industry of, by and for Labor, but in an overwhelming majority of instances is no less a bulwark against the economic, political and social betterment of Negro Labor.

The International Association of Machinists as well as several other International bodies of the A.F.L. along with the Railroad Brotherhoods, either by constitutional decree or general policy, forbid the enrollment of Negro members, while others if forced by his increasing presence in their jurisdictions, organize him into separate unions. There are but a few exceptions that are not covered by these two policies and attitudes. It is needless to state that the employing class are the beneficiaries of these policies of Negro Labor exclusion and segregation. It is a fact indisputable that Negro Labor's foothold nearly everywhere in organized labor's domains, has been secured by scabbing them into defeat or into terms that provided for Negro Labor inclusion in their ranks. What a sad commentary upon Organized Labor's shortsightedness and profound stupidity. In these United States of America less than 4 per cent of Negro Labor is organized. Fully 16 per cent of the Working Class in this country are Negroes. No genuine attempt by Organized Labor to wrest any worthwhile and lasting concessions from the Employing Class can succeed as long as Organized Labor for the most part is indifferent and in opposition to the fate of Negro Labor. As long as these facts are the facts, the Negro Section of the World of Industry can be safely counted upon by the Employing Class as a successful wedge to prevent any notable organized labor triumph. The millions of dollars which they have and continue to furnish Negro Institutions will continue to yield a magnificent interest in the shape of Negro Labor loyalty to the Employing Class.

Organized Labor can bring about a different situation. One that will speed the dawn of Industrial Freedom. First, by erasing their Race exclusion clauses. Secondly, by enrolling ALL workers in their Industrial or Craft jurisdictions, in the same union or unions, and where custom or the statutes prohibit in some Southern states, so educate their membership and develop the power and influence of their various unions as to force the repeal of these prohibition statutes and customs. Thirdly, by aiding and abetting his entrance into their various craft jurisdictions, unless he comes, of course, as a strike breaker. Fourth, by joining him in his fight in the South to secure political enfranchisement. Fifth, by inducting into the service of organized labor, Negro Labor Organizers and other officials in proportion to his numbers and ability.

The Organized Labor Movement has not begun to become a contender for its place in the Sun, until every man, woman and child in Industry is eligible to be identified with its Cause, regardless of Race, color or creed. The secret of Employing Class rule and Industry's control, is the division and lack of cohesion existing in the ranks of Labor. None can dispute the fact that Organized Labor's Attitude of indifference and often outspoken opposition to Negro Labor, contributes a vast amount to this division and lack of cohesion.

Organized Labor Banks, Political Parties, Educational Institutions, co-operatives, nor any other of its efforts to get somewhere near the goal of economic emancipation from the thralldom of the rich, will avail naught, as long as the color line lies across their pathway to their goal and before which they are doomed to halt and surrender. Until organized labor, generally casts aside the bars of race exclusion, and enrolls Negro Labor within its ranks on a basis of complete sincere fraternity, no general effort of steel, railroad, packing house, building trades workers or any workers for that matter, to advance from the yoke of Industrial slavery can succeed. Just as certain as day follows night, the Negro will continue to contribute readily and generously toward the elements that will make for their defeat. Personally, the writer would not have it otherwise unless organized labor, majorly speaking, right about faces on its Negro Labor attitude and policy!

Signs are not wanting that men and women of vision in the ranks of organized labor, of both the radical and conservative wing, are alive to the necessity of a reformation of organized labor's attitude on the Negro, and are attempting to bring their various organizations in line with such organizations as the United Mine Workers of America, Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the Industrial Workers of the World. Negro Labor has a part to play also in changing this present day attitude of organized labor. It should organize a nation-wide movement to encourage, promote and protect its employment and general welfare. Divided into central districts and branches thereof, it would be able to not only thereby force complete and unequivocal recognition and fraternal cooperation from organized labor, but at the same time render yeoman service in procuring the increased employment of tens of thousands of fully capable Negro workers in such positions as now are closed to them because of the lack of sufficient organized Negro Labor pressure in the right direction and with the right instrumentality of intelligent vision.

This organization would by virtue of its being comprised of Negro Labor of all Industries and crafts be able to safeguard its every advance and prevent any successful attack against same. Collective dealing with the Employing Class, is the only way by which Labor can procure any concessions from them of effect and meaning. It is the only way in which to establish industrial stability and uniformity in its administration and finally Industrial freedom. This holds good for Negro as well as white labor. There are fully 4,000,000 Negro men, women and children, eligible to participate in such a Negro Labor Federation.

The beginning of such an organization a generation ago, the attitude of organized labor to the Negro would be just the reverse today. Organized Labor for the most part be it radical or conservative, thinks and acts, in the terms of White Race. Like the preachers, politicians, who when preaching about the "immortality of the soul" or orating about the "glorious land of the free" have in mind and so explain, white folks. So with organized labor generally. To a large extent Negro Labor is responsible for this reprehensible exclusion, because of its failure to generate a force which when necessary could have rendered low the dragon head of Race prejudice, whenever and wherever it raised its head. It is not too late, however, to begin to rectify and to reap the benefits of united effort. Only by unifying our forces in such a way as to force organized labor to realize that we can do lasting good or lasting evil, will they, with the assistance of those men and women already in their ranks fighting to change their erroneous way, understand and "come over into Macedonia and help us."

## 22. CRAFT UNION COLOR LINE

In New York City a negro upholsterer named Jones lately signed an application to join the union when the firm for which he worked decided to have a closed shop. Jones had worked at his trade for 14 years. Local 70 of the Upholsterers' Union, securing contractual relations with the firm, refused to admit Jones to membership because of his color. He was discharged.

The I.W.W. does not organize workers like that. Workers of all races and colors, religions and other differences are alike robbed at the point of production by the employers, and the I.W.W. organizes workers without distinctions. By its very anti-union act of denying the negro membership, then forcing him out of a job, that so-called union, and kindred organizations, sow a wind of hatred and envy periodically reaped in a whirlwind of black scabbing.

Workers of all races have a common interest and a common foe. They are all oppressed by the same capitalist class, and their advancement to higher material and cultural levels toward eventual freedom from wage slavery is a process demanding working class solidarity. The boss does not care what color a worker is so long as he can squeeze profits from his hide whether it be white, black, brown or yellow. As he is indiscriminate in the business of robbing victims it is logical that the robbed raise no divisions among themselves in the job of opposition.

*Industrial Solidarity*, November 13, 1929.

## 23. LIKES LECTURE OF BEN J. FLETCHER

The editor is in receipt of a letter from E. S. Marlin, an A.F. of L. officer, who said he stopped at a New York City street meeting intending to listen for just a few minutes. It was an I.W.W. meeting, addressed by Fellow Worker Benjamin J. Fletcher. "I stayed for an hour until he finished," wrote Marlin.

"I have heard all the big shots of the labor movement over a period of 25 years," he went on, "from coast to coast and it is no exaggeration when I state that this colored man, Ben Fletcher, is the only one I ever heard who cut right through to the bone of capitalist pretensions to being an everlasting ruling class, with a concrete constructive working class union argument."

This correspondent said he learned more about the A.F. of L. from Fletcher's talk than he had ever known and predicted a great future for our organization if only we have more of the type of speakers that Ben Fletcher is.

*Industrial Solidarity*, August 11, 1931.

OTTO HALL AND THE TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL LEAGUE<sup>102</sup>

## 24. CALL NEGRO WORKERS TO MEET

T.U.E.L. Negro Department Issues Special  
Appeal to Send Delegates to Cleveland

As a special drive to bring to the attention of the Negro workers the call of the Trade Union Educational League to send delegates to a National Trade Union Unity Convention, in Cleveland, June 1-2, the Negro Department

of the T.U.E.L. has issued a special statement to Negro workers. The statement has been endorsed by the American Negro Labor Congress and is to accompany the regular call addressed to all workers when distributed widespread in those districts where there are many Negroes in the industries. The call to the Negro workers is as follows:

FELLOW WORKERS: The National Committee of the Trade Union Educational League has called for the election of delegates to constitute the Trade Union Unity Congress, to meet in the City of Cleveland, Ohio, at 10 a.m. on June 1, 1929, and to conclude on June 2. This call is of special interest to Negro workers.

With the partial check of immigration which came about during the last war, and which has continued since, bringing about the migration of Negro workers to northern industrial centers and with the growth of industry in the south, the demand for Negro workers in the large industries has increased.

The introduction of more machinery in the factories would, under a better system, shorten the hours of labor, but under the present capitalist system it is used by the employers to reduce the number of workers, increase the amount of work and lengthen the hours for those left on the job.

Since the great majority of Negro workers are unskilled and unorganized, they suffer more intensely than any other group from the effects of rationalism.

They suffer from double oppression, being oppressed as Negroes and as workers.

They are the last to be hired and are always the first to be fired. In every shop, mill, or factory they are given the worst jobs.

Negro workers are always the lowest paid workers in all industries. The worst and lowest paid jobs are considered "Negro jobs" and the better jobs are for the whites.

The Negro worker, no matter how capable, is seldom allowed to step into what is considered by the employers as a white man's job.

In the industrial centers to which these workers migrate, they are forced to live in the worst houses in the worst districts and pay the highest rents in spite of the low wages that they receive.

Because of the small earnings of the men the wives and children are forced to work in sweat shops and in the fields under the most miserable conditions.

The women are the prey of the lust of the white bosses and overseers. The children have little opportunity to attend schools because of being forced to work at an early age. In the South they are forced to attend Jim Crow schools unusually far away from where they live.

The Negro worker has always been used by the bosses to reduce the cost of labor.

The white bosses, therefore, consider the Negro a valuable source of cheap labor. We could go on endlessly talking about our miserable conditions. What we must do now is to find a way to better these conditions. That is the purpose of this call.

We must organize together with the fighting unions of white workers who are willing to fight together with us to better the conditions of the working class as a whole.

Since we are a minority group we cannot make this fight alone, nor can the white worker better his own conditions without fighting together with us against the whole system of oppression.

We all know about the American Federation of Labor and its policy towards the Negro worker. In spite of its general constitution and declaration, that it does not discriminate against the Negro, its affiliated bodies do, and during its 40 years or more of existence it has never made a serious effort to organize the Negro workers. It is only interested in the Negro worker insofar as he can be prevented from scabbing on his white fellow worker, but has never prevented the White Unions from scabbing on the Negro workers. While there are a few A.F. of L. unions which, under pressure, have admitted some Negro workers, the general policy is to organize Jim Crow Unions for them in order to tie their hands and keep them on the lowest economic level of all the workers.

This organization has been betraying both white and black workers for years. Typical of its attitude toward the Negro workers who are a part of the great mass of unskilled workers was its betrayal last year of the proposed strike of the Pullman Porters. Even its so-called recognition today of the

Pullman Porters' Brotherhood is a classical example of its treachery. The methods of these fakers in issuing charters to each local of the Brotherhood instead of a national charter to the Brotherhood as a whole is simply designed to weaken and destroy the organization and prevent its development into a fighting union. Negro workers throughout the United States will never forget the traitorous role of this Jim Crow, Ku Klux Klan organization.

The Trade Union Educational League and those who support it are the only organizations that have carried on a fight for the organization of all workers regardless of race, nationality or color. Its policy in the various unions has been to carry on a consistent fight for the admittance of Negroes and the breaking up of the exclusion policy of these fakers for many years. The T.U.E.L. which is the American Section of the Red International of Labor Unions is still carrying on the fight against the traitorous leadership of the A.F. of L. for the organization of Negro workers into all its affiliated unions that bar them and to force them to admit them on equal basis with the white workers. It has also fostered new unions as the Needle Trades who recently carried on a successful strike against the bosses, Textile, and new Miners Union. They are almost the only unions in existence which 'practic ' absolute equality for all workers regardless of race, and has Negro as well as white workers on all leading committees.

As examples of the fact that these unions practice what they preach, we have Wm. Boyce, a Negro miner, vice-president of the New Miners Union, Henry Rosemond, who was one of the first workers beaten up by the police during the recent Needle trade strike in New York City, and who is a member of the General Executive Board of the Needle Trades Industrial Union. Virginia Allen, a colored woman needle worker, is also a member of this Executive Board.<sup>103</sup>

The Trade Union Unity Convention is called for the purpose of uniting all groups of organized and unorganized workers into a solid united fighting front against the bosses.

This Convention, which is of particular interest for Negro workers, will deal with all problems affecting the unorganized Negro and white workers.

It will fight against capitalist wars, which draft the Negro workers as tools and cannon fodder to help conquer the workers of other races and nationalities and then deny these workers rights as citizens after their return. It will fight for the organization of the oppressed Negro women workers and will carry on a strenuous fight against child labor.

It will fight for social insurance, which will benefit the workers who are injured by the speed-up system, and who are forced to retire from work at an early age because of disability.

It will advance the platform of International Trade Union Unity. It will organize the workers, black and white, on an industrial basis instead of the narrow craft basis of the A.F. of L.

It will fight for the admittance of all Negro seamen and dock workers, etc., into the various unions that discriminate against them or failing in this, it will organize new unions of white and Negro workers in these industries.

It will create one common trade union center for all class struggle organizations.

All groups of organized and unorganized Negro workers must get together and elect delegates to send to this convention.

This is our opportunity to fight against race discrimination and better our conditions as a whole.

NEGRO WORKERS! SEND YOUR DELEGATES TO THE COMING CLEVELAND CONVENTION!

Our Emancipation Is in Our Own Hands!  
 Let's Quit Whining and Start Fighting!  
 We Must Prepare to Fight for Ourselves!  
 Equal Pay for Equal Work!  
 Shorter Work Day!  
 Against Peonage!  
 Against Jim Crow Schools!  
 Against White Terrorism in the South!  
 Strengthen Our Fight Against Child Labor!  
 Take Our Women Out of the Fields and Sweat Shops!

Build a New Trade Union Center!  
 Fight Against the Race Discrimination Policy of the A.F. of L. Leadership!  
 Carry on Active Fight Against Lynching of Negro Workers and Farmers!

(Signed) OTTO HALL.  
 Director Negro Dept., Trade Union  
 Educational League.  
 Endorsed by American Negro Labor Congress.

*Daily Worker*, April 6, 1920.

## 25. ABOLISH RACE DISCRIMINATION!

The news from the 24th convention of the American Federation of Labor that the secretary of the Texas State Federation of Labor, in greeting the delegation, insisted that the immigration of Mexican workers into the country should be stopped, is typical of the stupid policy of race discrimination permeating the unions of the American Federation of Labor. Evidently the Texas labor unions do not think of organizing these workers and fighting together with them against the employers.

The most disgraceful indifference, however, is that toward the organization of the Negro workers. The great bulk of the 12,000,000 Negroes in the United States are workers. They need organization even more than do their white fellow workers. Do they get it? Not from Gompers.

Yet, as an "inferior race" the employers organize them against the white workers. By first paying them atrociously low wages for the hardest and most menial work, they make them in their unorganized state, a possible reservoir of strikebreaking labor.

The cast system in American labor must be broken. We have heard too much of workers scorning each other as "Hunkies," "Wops" and "Jews." The whole system is an aid direct and unmistakable to the interests of the employers in dividing the workers the better to exploit them. It inspires prejudice among the workers which require much time and teaching in order to counteract and lay the fraternal basis of class solidarity in the unions.

The continued migration of Negroes to the cities of the north only accents the problem. The case with them is the same as with the Mexicans in the Southwest. The policy of stupid and shortsighted selfishness, of craft privileges and organized monopoly prevails at the expense of both blacks and whites. Necessity, stern and inevitable, demands its complete eradication.

The T.U.E.L. has endorsed a resolution that will be offered at the A.F. of L. convention which is intended to set that body on record one way or the other as to its stand on racial discrimination. The resolution calls upon the A.F. of L. to declare itself unalterably opposed to any discrimination in any form whatsoever against workers because of race or color, and in favor of equality of such workers.

The resolution not only asserts these principles, but instructs the executive council of the A.F. of L. to start an immediate campaign to organize Negro wage workers and demands that these workers shall be organized in the same unions as the whites in order that the stupid prejudices now existing thru past misteaching shall be wiped out by fraternal contact as brothers in toil and struggle against common exploiters.

With the increasing pressure upon the workers by the capitalist class, and the danger of great wage struggles, the persistence of racial discrimination is a knife labor is turning against its own vitals. If the A.F. of L. convention does not act favorably upon this resolution, it will have proved itself recreant to its own members and indifferent to the interest of the working class.

*Daily Worker*, November 19, 1924.

## 26. T.U.E.L. NEGRO DEPARTMENT IN CAMPAIGN FOR UNITY MEET

"There will be many Negro delegates at the Trade Union Unity Conference in Cleveland," said Otto Hall, director of the Negro Department of the Trade Union Educational League, yesterday in an interview with the *Daily Worker*.

Hall is just starting on an extended tour of all industrial centers where Negroes form a large percentage of the workers to assist in the spreading of the T.U.E.L. call for the convention and to direct attention of the workers to the special problems of the Negroes.

## Smash Race Prejudice

"The great textile strikes in North and South Carolina now going on have convinced the white workers there that their Negro fellow workers are as good fighters as anybody," said Hall. "The Negroes and white workers now serve on the same strike committees, meet in the same place for union meetings, and in general treat each other like workers, without regard to race, and this to the South, where race prejudices have been kept alive by the bosses to the best of their ability," Hall pointed out. "From the textile region now on strike there will be Negro delegates elected by white and Negro workers together," he continued.

## To Mine Strike Area

Hall stated that his tour would take him to such automobile centers as Flint and Detroit, Mich., the mining regions like West Virginia and Birmingham, Ala., where Negroes also work in the steel industry, the packing houses of Chicago, etc.

In the Scotts Run mine fields of West Virginia, a similar situation exists as that at Gastonia, N.C., for white and Negro workers are striking shoulder to shoulder under their own militant leadership, against the employers.

*Daily Worker*, April 8, 1929.

## 27. ORGANIZE THE NEGRO WORKERS

## Fight Against Inequality

By Wm. Z. Foster <sup>104</sup>

One of the most important features of the Trade Union Educational League convention to be held in Cleveland on June 1st and 2nd will be the large delegation of Negro workers present. To organize the Negro proletarians, to draw them into the main stream of new revolutionary industrial union movement will be a major objective of the T.U.E.L. convention.

Of all the shameful treason to the working class committed by the misleaders who stand at the old trade unions, none has been more disastrous than their systematic betrayal of the Negro workers. It has long been the policy of the employers to draw a line between white and black workers, to set one group against the other in order to better exploit them, to cultivate the worst forms of race prejudice among the whites. They have deliberately and systematically discriminated against the Negroes, giving them the worst work, the lowest wages, and subjecting them to the most brutal repression.

## A.F.L. Won't Organize

Were the A.F. of L. leaders imbued with even a semblance of real working class spirit they would take it upon themselves as a first and basic task to defeat the plans of the employers by organizing the Negroes and by mobilizing the whole labor movement behind their elementary demands. But they refuse utterly to do this. On the contrary, true to their role as agents of the



bourgeoisie in the ranks of the workers, they fall in line with the program of the employers and join hands with them to oppress the Negroes. They cultivate race chauvinism among the whites, they prohibit Negroes from joining the unions, they cooperate with the employers to keep the Negroes at the poorest paid jobs. All this constitutes one of the most shameful pages in American labor history.

#### Class Brothers

But the T.U.E.L. convention represents the revolutionary forces that will stop this historic treachery. The convention will be made up of a body of workers of both sexes and all nationalities, of Negroes who understand and dare to strike a blow in behalf of themselves and their class, and of whites eliminating all white chauvinism from their ranks, recognize the Negro workers as class brothers and who will fight with and for them all the way to the end for complete social emancipation. The T.U.E.L. convention will have more significance to Negro workers than any other trade union gathering ever held in this country.

Negroes constantly take on more importance as a force in industry and as a potential factor in the trade union movement. During the past dozen years hundreds of thousands of them have poured into the mills and factories. For the most part they are going into the key and basic industries, coal, railroads, steel, meat packing, etc., exactly those industries that play the most decisive role in the class struggle. In a recent number of the R.I.L.U. bulletin occurs the following statement quoting Carroll Binder regarding Negroes in the industries of Chicago in 1929:

"Thirty per cent of the labor force in the Chicago packing industry is colored; the Corn Products Company, which employed only one Negro eight years ago, today employs 350, or twenty per cent of its working force. Beavers Products--65 per cent. The American Hide and Leather Co. was the first tannery to use Negro workers; now all the tanneries use large numbers of them. The foundries and laundries are heavy employers of Negroes. Eleven per cent of the employees of the Pullman Car shops are Negroes. Negro women compose forty per cent of the workers in the lamp shade industry. About twenty per cent of the 14,000 postal workers of Chicago are Negroes," etc., etc.

The great importance to industry and the class struggle of this constantly increasing body of Negro workers cannot be too much stressed. It is the special task of the T.U.E.L. to organize them as part of its general work of organizing the unorganized. This can only be done in the face of studied opposition of the A.F. of L. leaders working hand in glove with the employers.

#### Special Committees

But in order that the necessary progress shall be registered by the T.U.E.L. convention in the organization of the Negro workers real work must be done by the left forces between now and the convention. Special committees must be established in the various important industrial centers to prosecute this particular task. These committees, together with the general organizing forces of the T.U.E.L. must establish contacts with the Negroes in all the important industrial plants and draw them into all the shop committees, T.U.E.L. groups, and other organizations formed as a basis for the convention. In every delegation from every industry where Negroes are employed, there must be a heavy percentage of these workers included. There especially must be a large delegation of Negro workers from the coal and iron mines, the steel mills, fertilizer works, railroads, the cotton and tobacco plantations, and other industries of the South. The real mass character of the T.U.E.L. convention will be measured pretty much by the number of representative Negro workers present.

#### Good Fighters

The Negro workers are good fighters. This they have proved in innumerable strikes in the coal, steel, packing, building and other industries, despite systematic betrayal by white trade union leaders and the presence of an all, too prevalent race chauvinism among the masses of white workers. They are a tremendous source of potential revolutionary strength and vigor.

They have a double oppression as workers and as Negroes, to fill them with fighting spirit and resentment against capitalism. It has been one of the most serious errors of the left wing to underestimate and to neglect the development of this great proletarian fighting force.

Let the T.U.E.L. convention therefore be a great mobilization center for the Negro workers. There must be present Negroes from all the important plants and localities. Such a delegation, upon which the success of the convention depends can and will be assembled. The T.U.E.L. convention will be a revolutionary signal and inspiration to the masses of Negro workers, exploited and oppressed in the mills, mines and factories of American imperialism.

*Daily Worker*, May 16, 1929.

## 28. NEGRO TRADE UNION MILITANTS SHOW A.F.L. SELLOUT OF PORTERS

On the occasion of William Green's arrival in New York to speak before the Pullman porters whose strike he together with the rest of the A.F. of L. Executive Council betrayed, the Department of Negro Work of the Trade Union Educational League issued a statement which follows in part:

Fellow Workers:

William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, will address you this Sunday afternoon, upon the invitation of your leaders.

Will William Green tell you why the Brotherhood's strike was betrayed at the instigation of the American Federation of Labor? Will he tell you why he and the others of the reactionary clique which controls the A.F. of L. were so reluctant in recognizing the Brotherhood and the right of the Negro employees of the millionaire Pullman Company to organize for a living wage? Or why, after they reluctantly recognized this right of yours, they proceeded to issue local charters to your various locals instead of an international charter for your organization as a whole? What was their purpose in thus seeking to prevent your unity of action? Why did they prevent and betray your strike at a time when even your national organizer admitted that the chances of success were excellent? Why did they insist on giving the Pullman Company warning of your intention and time to organize strike-breaking measures.

The Negro workers are rightly suspicious of the A.F. of L. Our memory may be short, as our oppressors believe, but we well remember how the A.F. of L. betrayed the strike of the Negro laundry workers of New York City, going the length of calling off this strike and recalling their charter when these terribly exploited workers tried to abolish some of the heartbreaking misery existing in the laundry industry. It was the A.F. of L. leadership that consigned these Negro workers back to the hellish exploitation of the pitiless laundry bosses from which they sought to escape by organization. Yes, the Negro workers have cause to remember the treacherous role of the A.F. of L. bureaucracy!

Fellow workers of the Brotherhood! Join the fight against the rotten treacherous A.F. of L. leadership!

Join the struggle for the removal of the color bar in all working class organizations, for the abolition of race hatred, and racial separation, for the abolition of lynching and white ruling class terrorism which will only be abolished by a united working class.

Join the new trade union center. Send delegates to the trade union unity convention in Cleveland, August 31.

Department of Negro Work  
Trade Union Educational League  
Otto Hall, Director

*Daily Worker*, June 29, 1929.

## 29. THE NEGRO WORKER IN NORTHERN INDUSTRY

By Otto Hall

(General Field Organizer of the Workers' [Communist] Party)

While traveling through industrial centers in the United States, one is impressed with the general solidarity in appearance of the so-called "Black Belts" in the various cities. Go to any city that has a large Negro population and it is not difficult to find the Negro section. It is only necessary to take the nearest street car, ride out to the oldest and most dilapidated section of the city where streets are oldest, lined on either side by tumble-down shacks or old fashioned flats (usually condemned), and one finds himself in what is sometimes politely called the "colored neighborhood."

## Proletarian Districts

These neighborhoods usually border on, or are directly in what was formerly known as the "Red light districts." Although these districts are according to law, supposed now to be non-existent, prostitutes, white and black, "ply their trade" in these neighborhoods, and bootleg joints and cabarets are "wide open." Young Negro children growing up in this environment, "learn the ropes" at a very early age. Almost every night, groups of idle rich and other parasites, themselves responsible for the miserable conditions obtaining in these ghettos, drive up in fine limousines (usually parking them in the next block) flaunting their wealth squeezed from the toil of these same people in their faces, in order to corrupt Negro women, whom they consider their legitimate prey. The object of these excursions of the rich in the Negro districts, is to indulge in what is known as "changing their luck."

The so-called "better class" of Negroes, comprising professional men and women, such as lawyers, doctors, dentists, politicians and wealthier Negroes, live in somewhat better houses, usually at the edges of these districts, in flats or houses that were formerly occupied by middle class whites in the 90's or earlier, for which they pay high prices. Some of these Negroes, in order to escape being segregated in black belts, buy houses in so-called "white" neighborhoods, which is resented by the "exclusive" whites, and brings about clashes which have sometimes resulted in race riots.

The worst parts of these districts are usually occupied by the newly arrived Negro workers from the South, who are forced to live in these congested districts, paying enormously high rents for small dingy flats. Usually the family is forced to live in one room and to rent out the other rooms to lodgers. Most of these workers earn on an average less than \$20 a week, and pay rents averaging \$70 a month or more for 4 or 5 room flats with almost no modern conveniences. In order to make this rent they are often forced to run what is known as "buffet flats," places where they sell moonshine and rent "transient" rooms. These houses are allowed by the landlords to rot away and are hardly ever kept in repair.

In most of these cities, the Negro is discriminated against in the better class of restaurants, theatres and other public places. The forms of this discrimination are regulated by local conditions in different centers. In Pittsburgh they display quite openly, in the white restaurants, signs reading "We do not cater to Negroes," while in some cities, other methods are used. For example, in Detroit, a prospective Negro patron is offered a meal in the kitchen. In Cleveland at one of the many "Thompson one-arm ptomaine foundries," the writer stood at the serving counter for a full half hour and when he asked the "counter boy" when would he serve him, this dumb, misguided, \$14-a-week capitalist-minded slave told him that if he didn't have time to wait till he got around to him, he could go elsewhere.

There are usually no good hotels in these cities where Negroes can find accommodations. The so-called "Negro Hotels" are usually tumble-down places without even ordinary conveniences and charge double what a white hotel of a similar class would charge. If a Negro wants to find lodgings or to eat, he must go to the "Negro section" which is usually an out-of-the-way place, far away from the center. This inconvenience is also experienced by the Negro worker who works in places located in the downtown or outlying districts. If, for instance, a Negro working in some of the downtown places wants to eat lunch,

he is compelled to either bring his lunch with him to work, or go to some restaurant in the Negro district which is usually too far away for his convenience.

#### Proletarianization

More and more Negroes are being drawn into the industries, particularly since the war, and the subsequent process of rationalization has brought about the increasing mechanization of these industries enabling the industrialists to use less skilled labor and increase their forces of semi-skilled or unskilled workers. This process is bringing about the rapid proletarianization of the Negro masses. These Negroes are usually unorganized and are given the worst and most dangerous jobs and paid the lowest wages.

Every means possible is used to keep the workers of different nationalities and races divided. Among the various nationalities, religious differences are sharpened, and between the Negro and white workers the question of color is emphasized. One of the many methods used is to make a difference in the wages of the Negro and white workers. On some jobs we find that the white worker is given a little more money for the same work. This gives the white worker a feeling of superiority over the Negro and causes him to look upon his fellow-worker with contempt. In many factories they have separate locker-rooms, dressing rooms and rest rooms for Negro workers.

Organizations comprised of Negro petty-bourgeois intellectuals, politicians, backed by these white capitalist "philanthropist" factory owners, organize so-called "welfare associations" which are used by the capitalists to further this antagonism, using these Negro welfare clubs, etc., as a sop to the Negro workers.

Some Negro intellectual tool is given a paid job by the corporation as the head of the organization in the particular factory. These organizations attempt to prevent the Negro worker from fighting against "Jim Crow" conditions in the plants and to prevent him from organizing with the white workers.

Usually some Negro stool-pigeon is used to organize a Jim Crow company union and in order to put these unions over, the plea used among the Negro workers is, "We must have our own organization." These conditions are prevalent in almost all industrial centers where Negro workers are employed.

#### Growing Class Consciousness

We, ourselves, have noticed the sharpening of class lines within the Negro race, but the important thing for us is, that the Negro workers themselves are beginning to recognize this difference. The Negro worker is beginning to recognize himself as a class and is fact losing confidence in the middle-class intellectuals and big Negro politicians, who were formerly accepted by the Negro masses as their leaders. The Negro workers are beginning to see through the fake pretenses of "race loyalty" that these so-called leaders have used to betray them to the white ruling class.

At a meeting with a group of Negro workers, several questions were put to them by the writer, concerning their attitude toward these Negro politicians business men and professionals. The answer given and opinions expressed by these workers were very clear and sharp on this matter. One worker expressed himself in the following manner, concerning Negro professionals, viz:

"These so-called 'Big Negroes,' doctors, lawyers, don't care anything about us workers, all they are concerned about is to get themselves a swell home and a car. When they get a little money, they can't see us 'for the dust' when they meet us on the street."

Another worker expressed himself on Negro bourgeois politicians of the republican, democratic and socialist parties in a similar emphatic manner:

"I have lived in this town for more than 20 years and have seen these Negro capitalist politicians come and go. We've had Negro republican and democratic aldermen in our ward and sent several to the state legislature. But what's the use? Look at the condition of our streets; they haven't been repaired since they were first paved. The garbage stays in the alleys until it rots--you can smell it now--and they do nothing about it. They don't make any kind of fight against race discrimination. The only thing they are concerned with is the graft they get from the 'up-stairs crap games,' 'buffet flats' and 'blind pigs.' They come around on election days to tell you how

much they are going to do for their race and when they get in office you need a high-powered telescope in order to see them."

### Negro Preachers

Another worker gave us the "lowdown" on preachers. He said that all these preachers work for is to get enough money to buy some old abandoned white church and bleed his congregation for the rest of their lives to get it paid for. Another said that Negro landlords were even worse than white ones and that he never would work any more for a Negro boss. They think that you ought to be ready to work for less pay and longer hours for them just because they are colored.

In the following articles, I will tell about my organization experiences among the Negroes, their response to our meetings, etc. Among the many points I will touch on, are the effects of our election campaign on the Negro masses, their attitude toward trade unions, religion and their reaction to our Communist program and general lessons of the tour.

*Daily Worker*, March 1, 1929.

### 30. INTERVIEW WITH OTTO HALL

I was born in Omaha, Nebraska on May 16, 1891. There were three of us. I was the oldest. There is a sister Eppa in between, and a brother, the youngest, who is known as Harry Haywood. Our parents were Haywood and Harriet Hall. My father was born in Martin, Tennessee; brought as a boy to Des Moines, Iowa; grew up there; and came to Omaha as a young man. There he went to work for the Cudahy Packing Co. as a porter and nightwatchman. A short time after, he met and married my mother, Harriet.

Her name was Harriet Thorpe Harvey, a young widow who was born in Howard County, Missouri; grew up in Moberly, Missouri; later went to St. Joseph, Missouri and then came to Omaha.

Neither of my parents had more than four or five years of "schooling" as it was called in those days. Father had to go to work at an early age and our mother was one of a large family of girls. It was customary among Afro-American families that some of the children would make sacrifices so that two or three of them could get some education and perhaps one or two could be sent away to some college.

My father was an avid reader and had accumulated a home library of more than three hundred books. He had many of the English classics of that period --complete works of Shakespeare, Bulwer-Lytton, Conan Doyle, Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Mark Twain, Longfellow's poems, the Autobiography of Frederick Douglass, the Fourty-four Lectures of Robert Ingersoll, and many others including the large family Bible.

I remember when I was very small, before I started to school that my father used to conduct after supper, on his night off, what was known as a family circle. He would read to us aloud from some of his books and the daily paper. I used to listen wishing that I could read and was determined to learn how. It was from these circles that we acquired our reading habits.

In 1913, the family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where my father's two younger brothers were living. I never joined the Socialist Party, but did vote for Thomas Van Lear, who became the first Socialist mayor of that city. I voted for him because he had an Afro-American campaign manager, Colonel John Dickerson whom I knew and respected. He was a fluent speaker and told us that if you elect this man there will be colored men in the City Hall and they won't be porters. Van Lear was elected mayor of that city in 1945.

During the summer evenings, I used to go down to the "skid row" at the foot of Hennepin Avenue, where the I.W.W., better known as the "Wobblies" used to hold large open-air meetings. There I met Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Ben Fletcher, a well-known Afro-American I.W.W. leader, Joe Hillstrom, better known as Joe Hill. I soon joined them and got my "red" card.<sup>105</sup>

I made one harvest with a group of them, and when we got to that farm in North Dakota, the farmer did not want to hire me because of my color, they told him that they would not tolerate any discrimination of any worker because of his color or nationality and if he did not hire me, he would not harvest his crop. I was hired. I found out that they carried out their program of no discrimination not only in words but in action. I do not know how many Afro-Americans were in the organization but learned that there were quite a few members all the way to the Pacific Coast.

When I got back to Minneapolis I found that my family had moved to Chicago. I went there and later joined the army and was in France 14 months. I got back to Chicago in the spring of 1919, just a few months before the riots broke out.

We were all disgusted and very angry at the conditions we found at home, lynching and burning in the South, and even some places in the North. Many veterans were on the streets in those days discussing the situation and there were crowded street meetings. Among the speakers who impressed me most in those times was a young Afro-American chemist Bob Hardeen, and John Owens and his brother Gordon, Bill and Elizabeth Doty. Bob talked about Lenin and the Russian Revolution and quoted from a translation of some of Lenin's writings by a man named Louis B. Fraina. Bob was a very dramatic speaker and could make his points clearly and simply and always drew a large crowd. I began to do a lot of reading. I read the *Messenger* magazine which was edited by Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph. Even the *Chicago Defender* was militant in those days. It carried on its front page the caption: "If you must go down take 8 or 10 whites with you." When they got news of a black man killing some white man in self-defense this news was played up on its front page. And there was an even more militant Afro-American newspaper called the *Chicago Whip*. Shortly after I got back from France I joined the Garvey movement, better known as the U.N.I.A., and became a captain in the Black Legion. At this time I considered myself a left wing Garveyite. I was sympathetic to Garvey's appeal for a "Free Africa" but did not believe in the migration of Black Americans to Africa. I believed that we could help in the fight for a free Africa, by fighting for our rights here. I was also beginning to become disgusted with some of the things going on in the Garvey movement. Some elements were making a racket out of the organization. These elements were composed of lawyers without briefs and preachers without pulpits and other charlatans. Earlier at one of the street meetings Bill Doty gave me a copy of the *Crusader Magazine* published by Cyril Briggs and invited me to join the African Blood Brotherhood. This was before the riots started.<sup>106</sup>

In that year, 1919, many so-called riots broke out in cities all over the country, North and South. This period has been referred to by some historians as "bloody 1919" and "the red summer" of that year. Twenty-six so-called race riots broke out. There was a new dimension in these riots. They were not all one-way massacres. Some were in fact wars. Afro-Americans fought back and some whites as well as colored were killed.

In Chicago, the spark that started the war there was the stoning to death of a young colored boy who was swimming at a beach in Lake Michigan. There was a so-called line dividing that part of the lake for colored and white. This boy was supposed to have been swimming on the wrong side of the line. In Chicago 15 whites and 25 Afro-Americans were killed. Besides these there were 11 policemen killed, 10 white and one Afro-American. These were not counted among the riot casualties. If one counts these among the casualties, it would be about even between the riot dead. I will say that with this the Afro-American people of Chicago did not feel that they were defeated in the riots. This so-called riot differed in many ways from some of the recent riots. The black people did not tear up the black ghetto but checked any attempted invasion by whites. They formed a Hindenburg line and dared any white mobsters to cross it. It was bordered on the West by Wentworth Ave., on the East by Cottage Grove, on the South by 63rd St. and on the North by 22nd St. I was one of a group of veterans known as Guardians of that line.

The Afro-American press in Chicago, namely the *Chicago Defender*, edited by Robert S. Abbot, some weeks before the riot had been carrying on a campaign urging the black people to fight back and defend themselves against their white oppressors. This paper had a wide circulation in many sections of the South. Often it was brought to those people by Pullman porters and waiters running down there. It carried a caption in bold letters, "If you must go down, take eight or ten crackers with you."<sup>107</sup>

When the riot began, the government forced Abbot to change that caption. Another militant paper was the *Chicago Whip* edited by Joe Bibb. It had mostly a local circulation and carried on a successful boycott campaign forcing the white merchants on the South side to hire Afro-Americans in their stores. I believe this was after the riots and was the first boycott effort of black people in any section of the country.

After the riot I went to work as a dining car waiter for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul that ran from Chicago to Seattle and Tacoma, Washington. I became active in the African Blood Brotherhood and after one of my trips to the Coast, Gordon Owens took me to a Party meeting on the Northwest side. There I met Jack Johnstone who, I learned, had led a group of Afro-American and white packinghouse workers through the stockyards district during the riot urging black and white solidarity. I joined the Party which was underground at the time, which to me was very romantic. After I came back from one of my trips I attended a bazaar given by some of the language federations for the Russian famine relief. I made a small contribution and promised to see what I could do to help the people of the Soviet Union who were suffering from the famine. There were some Afro-American sympathizers in Chicago who were a little better off than most of us, and who had helped us on numerous occasions. One of these was Roy Tibbs, who wielded quite an influence among some people there, and he raised some money which was sent to the relief headquarters. On my next trip to the Coast I contacted some people out there and found out that they had already started to raise money for famine relief. Bob Hardin also spoke at some benefits for Russian relief and helped to raise money.

At one of the meetings I was elected as a delegate to the Brideman Convention, but I had to make my run to the Coast. Had I realized the significance of that convention I would have laid off my trip and attended.

In 1922 the Party came out from underground and the former language federations formed language branches and united with other Communist groups and formed the Workers (Communist) Party. And on the South Side, the English branch was formed. The nuclei of this branch were members of the African Blood Brotherhood. Many Afro-Americans were recruited in this branch and so it grew. We participated in community activities and at one time our branch had more than 75 members. Nearly all of them were Afro-Americans. At that time there was a continued factional fight in the rest of the Party and both factions sent representatives into our branch to try to influence the membership to support a given faction. The Ruthenberg faction sent Bob Minor as their representative and the Foster faction sent Bill Dunne. They carried the factional squabble into our branch, each accusing the other of being prejudiced against Afro-Americans. At some of our meetings Minor and Dunne quarreled and almost engaged in fist fights. In a short time our membership dropped from over 75 to about 25 or 30, most of those remaining being the original members of the African Blood Brotherhood. We felt that we were being used as a factional football, but we stuck it out. I was more influenced by the Ruthenberg group, and most of us were sympathetic to that group but were not hard-boiled factionalists. We ran into many instances of prejudice among some members of the Party, some of them flagrant. Each faction accused the other in these incidents. We had faith in Lenin and the Russian comrades and had heard that they sharply criticized some of our leading comrades who had gone over there, for insufficient work among the black people in this country and felt that if we could get over there, we could straighten out the situation in our Party. When we heard that they wanted a group of Afro-American students to go over there to school, we were glad and knew that the Russian comrades would help us straighten out the situation in our Party and were patient. They had asked originally for 10 Afro-American students; we were able to get 5 together. They were Oliver Golden and his wife, the one colored woman in the group and who died over there; Harold Bailey, known as Harold Williams, from Jamaica; Awoona Bahkole, an African from the Gold Coast, and myself. When we found out we were actually going, I got together with some of our comrades in our branch and we prepared a sort of dossier listing many actions of discrimination we encountered in the Party as the main cause of the loss of some of the Afro-American comrades in our branch. We had a long list and we made several typewritten copies, some of which I carried over there. I was put in charge of the group. We arrived in Moscow in 1925, in the spring, and were sent to the Eastern University, better known as the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, named for Stalin. We were the original "five." Later on in that same year, in mid-winter,

Maude White, a comrade from Ohio, was sent there. To my surprise, my brother Haywood, better known as Harry Haywood, came there also. Later on, Roy Mahoney, an active Afro-American comrade from East Liverpool, Ohio, and another colored girl from Chicago, whose name I can't remember, whom I had seen at some of our street meetings, came. The next year, William Patterson arrived. We learned that he, a lawyer, had been involved in the fight for Sacco and Vanzetti, a case which had been the "cause celebre" in almost every part of America and Europe.<sup>108</sup>

When we five got to Moscow we were sent immediately to the Eastern University and found quarters there. This University was sponsored by and named for Comrade Stalin. We had hardly been there a week when he sent for us. We were taken to the Kremlin in a car sent by Stalin. Karl Radek, who knew enough English, served as an interpreter and was present at the interview. We drank tea and talked informally for several hours. Stalin said that since the Negro people represented the most oppressed section of the working class, therefore the American Party should have more of them than whites. Why weren't there more in the American Party. I said that prejudice and discrimination within the Party were largely responsible for the shortage of Afro-American members. I told him about the South Side English Branch which had been formed in 1922 and with about 75 "Negro" members, most of whom had drifted away because of the patronizing attitude of some of the white members. Comrade Stalin then said the whole approach of the American comrades is wrong. You are a national minority with some of the characteristics of a nation. He asked us to prepare a memorandum on the "Negro question" and promised to provide us with relevant publications and books.

After we five students had been at school for a year we were transferred to the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). As such, we participated in the Party struggle against Trotskyism. The struggle was against the theory of "permanent revolution" projected by the group led by Trotsky and the idea of building "socialism in one country" by the majority of the Party, led by Comrade Stalin. Our school was located in the Party District known as the Krasny Preshminsky which was one of the largest working-class districts in Moscow. In this struggle, we attended many meetings and heard speeches and there were speeches by representatives of both groups and there was full discussion at these meetings at the school and the district meetings.

Our district voted overwhelmingly in favor of the majority group headed by Comrade Stalin. We were delegates to the Seventh Plenum which made the final decisions. This was an important part of our studies at our school. I considered it a great honor to become a member of the world's greatest revolutionary party. One of the great moments was to attend this plenum where Trotsky and his cohorts were decisively defeated by the majority of the delegates. Trotsky was a brilliant orator. He did not trust an interpreter and translated himself into German, French, and English, bitterly attacking Comrade Stalin. He said that Comrade Lenin had referred to Comrade Stalin as rude. Comrade Stalin answered by saying, "Yes, I am rude but Comrade Lenin also said I was honest and trustworthy." Comrade Stalin impressed me as being calm through these proceedings letting him talk without interruption, sitting back smoking his pipe and listening to this tirade. Trotsky also attacked Pepper, referring to him as the international muddler of two continents. We learned that the building of socialism in one country was the idea originated by Comrade Lenin and that he had quarrelled with Trotsky and others on the theory of "permanent revolution" and referred to that idea as adventurism. His slogan was "electrication."

Early in 1928, a sub-committee on "the Negro question" was formed in the Anglo-American Department of the Comintern to prepare a resolution and other material. In August the Congress itself, a 32-member "Negro Commission" was formed to make the final recommendation. This commission included seven Americans--five Afro-Americans: James Ford, Harry Haywood, Oliver Golden, Harold Williams and myself. The two white Americans were Lovestone and Bitelman. Among the others were: Nasanov, representing the Young Communist International, Bunting of South Africa, Andrew Rothstein of England. The chairman was Comrade Kuusinen, Finnish Comintern official, and others.

It was into this commission that we brought the case history of chauvinist acts in the Party that had been prepared before we left Chicago. Sen Katayama, a Japanese comrade, who while in exile in America, graduated from Howard



University during the early part of the present century and was a member of the Communist International, said that while he considered the American Negroes as a subject nation, citing the riots of 1919 in positive terms, he also declared the Negro people to be "the best potential revolutionary factor in the American Communist Movement."

James Ford and I were the only Afro-American delegates that spoke at the Congress sessions. Haywood did not speak at these sessions but worked with Nasanov in the commission. Comrade Ford and I both spoke twice.

The first time Ford spoke he said "that the few Negro comrades we have left in the Party have been making a fight for years against the Party's under-estimation of Negro work" For this, many were persecuted and driven out of the Party. Now we bring it before a Comintern Congress. He concluded with the prediction that the next revolutionary wave will come from the "Negro" workers and the exploited workers and peasants of the countries in which "Negro" workers live. A couple of days later I spoke and said: "When Negroes join the Party they remain 'Negroes' within the Party. This is understandable. The chauvinism in the Party has made this so. There is more chauvinism in the American Party, in *both factions*, than in any other Party in the Comintern. This chauvinism led to a neglect of Negro work equally by both factions because it kept them from seeing the potentially revolutionary possibilities of the Negro toilers as the most exploited element in America." (This is from *Inprecorr* VIII August 8, 1928, p. 1812. I am identified as Jones).

Ford spoke the following day: "There is considerable discussion going on in the Negro Commission regarding the slogan for a republic of the Negro people of America. I am against it because a Negro nationalist movement would have the effect of arresting the revolutionary class movement of the Negro masses and further widening. . . ."

I spoke a day later. I noted "the existence of sharp class distinctions within the Negro community which tend to prevent a development of any national characteristics as such." The historical development of the American Negro has tended to create in him the desire to be considered a part of the American nation. "I feel most of all that the discussion which had suddenly begun to occupy the Negro Commission was somewhat utopian. There is no objection in our Party to the principle of a Soviet Republic for Negroes, but what measures are we going to take to alleviate their present condition in America? I feel that the Party's task is still to organize people on the basis of their everyday needs, for the revolution."

Interview with Otto Hall by Philip S. Foner, New York, October 15, 1967.  
Transcription in possession of the editors.

#### THE AMERICAN NEGRO LABOR CONGRESS AND THE NATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS<sup>109</sup>

##### 31. NEGROES WARNED NOT TO BE CAUGHT IN A TRAP

President Green of A.F. of L. Exposes "Congress" to be Held In Chicago

The so-called "American Negro Labor Congress" called to meet in Chicago on October 25 is an incubation of the Communists and intended to lure the colored wage earners into an un-American movement, declares William Green of the American Federation of Labor. He says that Communism in America is "comparable to the boll weevil in the Southern cotton fields. Both are importations and equally dangerous.

President Green has issued a warning to Negro workers in which he says: "During the past few days I have received a number of letters and telegrams asking if the American Federation of Labor approves of the American Negro Congress called by the Workers' (Communist) Party.

"The American Federation of Labor has not and will not approve of such a congress. It will not be held to benefit the Negro but to instill into the lives of the members of that race the most pernicious doctrine--race hatred.

"The Negro will be led to believe that the dark races of the world are in rebellion against the whites, and that all they need to do is to form an American Negro Labor Congress and all social, political, and economic discriminations will be wiped out.

"Originators of the Congress have headquarters in Chicago. They conduct a number of Communist organizations with interlocking directories that work under the direction of Moscow.

"I wish to warn all Negro members of trade unions that they are being led into a trap that will eventually be their undoing."

*Labor*, August 15, 1925.

### 32. THE AMERICAN NEGRO LABOR CONGRESS

That an American Negro Labor Congress is important, valuable and necessary goes without saying. It can achieve much if properly conceived and executed. But it must be truly and genuinely American. By this we don't mean that its entire membership should be confined to American Negroes or naturalized American Negroes. Not at all. By American we mean that its conception and formulation, its policies and tactics, and especially its control must be American. It must receive the moral and financial backing of American labor, white and black. To succeed it cannot be unrelated or antagonistic to the true representative of American labor the American Federation of Labor, however much its structure and policies may need criticism and reform. Certainly it ought to be obvious to anyone that no labor movement, despite its being labeled American can do any constructive work by way of bettering the conditions of either the Negro or white workers, whose seat of control is outside the country. The reason for this is simply that a labor policy conceived in Russia, Africa or France cannot, because of hard and fast nationalistic psychologies, meet and solve the problems of the American workers. First, because the French or English workers don't understand the labor problems of America. They don't understand the psychology of the American workers, a product of their social, economic and political background. For these reasons the American Negro Labor Congress will fail. In the first place it is not American. It is only nominally led by an American Negro Lovett Fort-Whiteman, a very splendid young man, well-meaning but misguided; competent in the writing of imaginative literature but too emotional for the conception, formulation and execution of broad, complex social, economic and political policies. The source of its influence and control, its backing, is the Communists of Russia, whose objective is the disruption of the labor movements of the countries of Europe and America. All of the criticisms by the Communists, however, of the American Labor movement are not altogether unsound, but their tactics are foolish, silly, dangerous and calculated to provoke unnecessary persecution to the cause of the movement here and elsewhere. This has been the colossal blunder of Soviet Russia. Lenin saw it but he couldn't correct it. Now the aims of the American Negro Labor Congress are commendable, save that there are too many of them. We don't oppose it because it is too radical. Its program is merely liberal, so camouflaged as to give the Communists a foothold among Negroes. Think of the impractical and ridiculous spectacle of the policies for the guidance of Negro workers in America being dictated in Soviet Russia by persons and groups who know nothing about Negroes. And even granted that the policies were sound, they could never be executed because of the fact that they could not reach the American Negro workers. It ought to be generally known by those who would organize the Negro workers that wherever the Negro workers are in the unions, and there are thousands of them unionized, they are in unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. But the Communists have been doing their darndest to wreck this organization. Naturally the A.F. of L. is sincerely fighting the Communists. And for the unorganized Negroes to be organized in a movement which is trying to destroy the A.F. of L. which embraces all of the organized Negroes, is to

start an intra-racial labor war. It would simply pit the American Negro in an organization under foreign control against the American Negro in a labor movement under American control. The American Negro workers would be the victims of such folly. Nor do we intend to convey the idea that we have any illusions about the shortcomings of things American. We recognize the limitations of the American Labor movement. We are out to correct them. We also think that we know more about labor conditions in America as well as the methods best calculated to deal with them than does the Third International of Soviet Russia, just as we feel that the Russian workers are better prepared to solve their problems than are the American or English workers. Even if there were American Negroes in Russia, they would not be prepared to control an organization for the leadership of Negroes in America.

*The Messenger*, 7 (August, 1925): 304-05.

### 33. NEGROES AND LABOR

One Protests Mr. Green's Warning Against Chicago Meeting

Content removed at rightsholder's request.

*New York Times*, August 13, 1925.

### 34. THE NEGRO AND LABOR

Data Sought by Urban League on His Place in Industry

Content removed at rightsholder's request.

Content removed at rightsholder's request.

*New York Times*, August 19, 1925.

### 35. THE A.F. OF L. AND THE NEGRO WORKER

Mr. Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, has issued a broadside against the American Negro Labor Congress, pointing out that it is unrepresentative of American Labor. Mr. Whiteman, the head of the American Negro Labor Congress, replied that Mr. Green could criticize the Congress with poor grace, because of the fact that the A.F. of L. has been recreant to its duty in organizing Negro workers. Now, Green is right. The American

Negro Labor Congress is certainly not representative of the American Negro worker because its seat of control is in Moscow. At the same time the A.F. of L. has been inexcusably indifferent to the entreaties of the Negro workers. It was quite natural that the Negro press should react as it did to Mr. Green's statement. It regards the attack of the President of the A.F. of L. as unjustified, thinking strictly of the failure of the various internationals, affiliated with the A.F. of L. to let down the bars to Negro labor. The issue, however, is much deeper. And, unfortunately, the Negro press does not understand it. It involves the right of American labor to control and determine its own affairs, as against the rule or ruin policy of the Communists who look to Zinoviev, head of the Third International as their generalissimo. It is this senseless policy of the Communists to control or disrupt the American labor movement which has won for them the bitter and unrelenting opposition of Mr. Green's organization as well as all of the organized labor movements in England and the European continent. The fact that the Communists start with the questionable premise that we are living in a revolutionary period, and that the tactics adopted should be calculated to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat and the soviet form of government, reveals their ignorance of the American state. Needless to say that this formula has no rational relation with the existing labor conditions in America. Naturally the organized labor movement which though conservative, has won the highest labor standards of any workers in the world, combats this philosophy whether proclaimed among white or black workers. But it ought to be clear to the students of labor problems in the United States that the Negro workers' interests are inextricably tied up with the interests of the white workers in America. What injures one will injure the other. The high wage standard and the eight-hour day of bricklayers, plasterers, painters, paperhangers, carpenters and mechanics of all kinds, are also enjoyed by Negro artisans. Most of the Negroes in the building industry in the South, West, East and North are organized by the A.F. of L. To break up the A.F. of L., then, the object of the Communists who control the American Negro Labor Congress, is to break down the present strong collective bargaining power of the Negro workers in the Federation and also out of it. It must be recognized in this connection that the unorganized workers' conditions in America are improved by virtue of the existence of five million men and women organized in the A.F. of L. Practically all of the Negro workers who are in any unions at all in the United States are in those affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. But the work of organizing the Negro workers should certainly not abate. Too few are organized. The same thing is true of the white workers. But the solution of this problem does not consist in introducing Russian socio-economic labor methods into the American labor situation. Nor does this imply that the American workers may not profit from the great experiment which, perhaps, may have been inevitable in Russia during those war days. It does not follow, however, that the Russian workers' methodology, however good for them, is also the only solution to the American labor problems. A thorough grasp of these varying psychological socio-economic political backgrounds of the workers in different lands is absolutely essential to the formulation of a sound constructive labor policy for the American workers in general and the Negro workers in Particular.

*The Messenger*, 7 (September, 1925): 324-25.

### 36. EQUALITY DEMANDED BY WORKERS

#### American Negro Labor Congress Head Says Reds Do Not Control Movement

CHICAGO, ILL., Oct. 1--Refuting the statement that Reds were seeking control of the American Negro Labor Congress which is scheduled to meet here during the week of Oct. 25, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, college-trained race communist, is perfecting his organization with labor leaders from all parts of the country.

William Z. Foster, Robert Minor and other well-known communists have been invited to address the meeting.

## Equality Demanded

Union of white and Negro workers will be the surest way to end lynching, race riots, race discrimination and other abuses from which the Negroes suffer, the literature of the Labor Congress proclaims.

"We are against Jim Crowism, black beltism, miscegenation laws and other discriminations," says an appeal for support. "We demand full social, political and economic equality, a united front of Negro and white workers and farmers and a labor party uniting all working class forces."

*Pittsburgh Courier*, October 3, 1925.

## 37. NEGROES SEEK "FULL SOCIAL EQUALITY"

CHICAGO, Oct. 29 (AP).--Full social equality for negroes was asked in resolutions adopted today by the American Negro Labor Congress. Federal and police officials listened to the proceedings of the congress, which has been by the American Federation of Labor as a Communistic organization. Most of the forty negro delegates say they represent unorganized workers.

*New York Times*, October 30, 1925.

## 38. BIG LABOR MEETING OPENS

CHICAGO, Ill., Oct. 29.--How to get the Negro into trade unions and how to make the trade unions accord equality to him was the topic at the American Negro Labor Congress which began a week's session Monday morning in the Metropolitan Community Center, 3118 Giles avenue. About 75 delegates from labor and farmer organizations are here for the meeting, according to Lovett Fort Whiteman, communist leader, who has charge of the congress.

"The aim of the congress is to mobilize and to co-ordinate into a fighting machine the most enlightened and militant and class-conscious workers of the race in the struggle of the race for the abolition of lynching, Jim Crowism, industrial discrimination, political disfranchisement and segregation of the race," Fort Whiteman declared. In an attack on President William Green, of the American Federation of Labor, who warned trade unionists to stay away from the communist congress, Fort-Whiteman said:

"No Jim Crow Unions"

"We want no Jim Crow unions. We demand that the American Federation of Labor tear down the barriers that segregate us from the white workers and keep us out of white unions. We colored workers will, through this congress, correct mistakes of our white brothers who have been foolishly misled by the wrong kind of leaders.

"The natural enemies of the Negro are the boss, the landlord and the capitalist."

## Island Radical Expected

Among those scheduled to address the congress are H. V. Phillips, Otto Huiswood, of New York; William Scarville, of Pittsburgh, Rothschild Francis, radical editor of the Virgin Islands, is expected to arrive.

About 500 attended the opening meeting of the congress held Sunday night in Pythian Hall, 207 East 35th street, at which addresses were made by Fort Whiteman, E. N. Taylor, a Chicago attorney, and several others. A number of white communist leaders were also in attendance at the meeting.

*Pittsburgh Courier*, October 31, 1925.

## 39. NEGROES STRIKE BACK AT UNIONS

Three negro legislators came within one vote of preventing the passage of an anti-injunction bill through the Illinois legislature. Asked why they insisted on voting against the measure, they replied that it was backed by union labor, which refuses to allow colored men in unions or to work beside them.

In still another way anti-negroism has arisen to plague trade unionists. The call has gone out throughout the South and northern industrial centers for an American Negro Congress under communist auspices. So concerned have American Federation of Labor officials become over this congress that an official warning directs trade unionists to stay away from the Chicago meeting. Labor officials have also been galvanized into action in meeting the communist charges by intensifying their organizing work among the colored.

*Locomotive Engineers Journal*, 59 (October, 1925): 745-46.

## 40. THE PLOT TO MAKE OUR BLACKS RED

In the game of *Rouge Et Noir*, if the red wins, the black loses, and our observant writers of the press believe the same thing will happen in the red game to bolshevize our colored workers--the blacks will lose if the reds win. But they all expect the reds to lose, to the distinct advantage of the blacks. The very attempt, however, may stir up trouble. Nothing but mischief, maintains the *Providence News* and other American dailies, can come of the recent attempt at Chicago to convert the American negro workingman to Bolshevism. The occasion was the American Negro Labor Congress, the first of its kind to be held, and behind the conference, says a new item in the *Chicago Tribune*, is a plot of Red Russia to spread Communism among the colored people of the entire world.

Among the speakers at the Chicago meeting, says the *Charlotte Observer*, "was William Z. Foster, the foremost Communist in this country." William Montgomery Brown, deposed Protestant Episcopal Bishop, also was one of the speakers in favor of organizing negroes along racial lines. The organizer of the Congress however, was a negro--Lovett Fort-Whiteman, who, according to Lester A. Walton, a negro correspondent of the *New York World*, is known as the 'reddest Red of his race.'" In 1924 Chicago Communists sent Fort-Whiteman to Russia, we are told, and at the present moment, asserts Owen L. Scott in a Consolidated Press dispatch from Chicago, "seven American negro young men and three young women are in Russia taking a three-year course of training for the Russian diplomatic service. That is tantamount to training for entrance to the Communist propaganda organizations."

For several months, says Mr. Walton in one of his Chicago dispatches to *The World*, "paid Communist workers have been in the field making a determined effort to enroll American negro workers under the Communist banner." And at the recent conference "no attempt was made to hide the fact that it was financed and directed from Moscow, and that the aim was to stir up race hatred and disorder in the United States," declares the *Chicago Tribune*.

The American Negro Labor Congress, says an Associated Press dispatch from Washington, as shown in its descriptive literature, was organized "with an eye even beyond the negroes of America. The ambitious program, as set forth would have the Congress take the leadership in an attempt to 'rally the negro races of the world for a struggle against imperialism.'" However, points out Mr. Walton, "the naming of white Communist workers on various committees is proof that the movement is not to be engineered and carried on by negroes alone." According to this negro authority, "white Communists have set about with carefully laid plans and ample funds to convince negro workers that their economic, social, and political emancipation is only to be had by affiliating with them." In an interview with him, Fort-Whiteman, central figure of the conference, says:

"We are standing in a very crucial period of history. We see the beginning of a series of wars in Morocco and throughout the colonial world.

"The fundamental aim of the Negro Labor Congress is to organize the industrial strength of the negro into a fighting weapon.

"The negro is essentially a worker-proletariat as we would call it, suffering all the abuses of the working class in general, but in addition to that racial abuses, racial discrimination, political disfranchisement and other racial oppression.

"The saving of the negro race in this country lies with the working class. To them great changes are coming. We are extending our hands to the white workers--to the workers of the world--to unite in a common cause against the common enemy.

"We understand this and know that it is to the interest of the ruling class to keep up this spirit of dominance. Changes must come to this situation, and we, the Negro Labor Congress, are going to bring about the change, regardless of the cost."

That Chicago Communists are behind the movement to bring the negro worker into the Soviet fold is indicated in the "greetings" to the Negro Labor Congress by the Trade Union Educational League of which William Z. Foster is the head, and editorials in *The Daily Worker*, a Chicago Communist organ. Says *The Worker*:

"As Communists we hail the Negro Labor Congress as the beginning of a movement with far-reaching implications. Not merely can it be the means of starting to mobilize the negro workers for a struggle against the degrading restrictions imposed upon them as a race, but as American workers, speaking the common language of the country, they can become a power in the labor movement. Furthermore, by being brought into the struggle against imperialism in the United States, they will receive training that will enable them to play an effective part in the world mobilization of the oppressed colonial peoples against capitalism."

To the *Philadelphia Record*, however, the idea that the American negro can be "bolshvized" is "ridiculously childish." "The agents of Communism are engaged in a vain undertaking," thinks a Southern paper, the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. "The Chicago pow-wow, with all its orations and resolutions, will have no influence upon the negro of this country," agrees the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. "The American negro will not be deceived by Moscow's pernicious propaganda," declares the *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, and the *Minneapolis Journal* assures us that "there is no reason for any one to lose sleep over the present situation." In this paper's opinion:

"The negro is naturally an enthusiast for any cause he embraces. But no amount of clever talking is going to make revolutionists out of millions of negroes who own their homes, drive their own motor-cars, manage their own stores, hotels, insurance companies, theaters and other enterprises, conduct their own colleges, and, more important still, have sizable deposits in their own banks.

"The average negro of today is not the gullible, somewhat illiterate and usually indigent citizen of forty years ago. By his own industry and common sense he has won the respect and confidence of his white countrymen. In any Communist revolution, in any general attack on private property, the American negro has proportionately as much to lose as the American white man. And he knows it."

"This is not the first time that we have been invited to shiver over the possibility of American negroes turned traitor to their Government," we are reminded by the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*. "Back in the war days it was suggested that the negroes might be corrupted by German agents, but it turned out that there was less pro-Germanism among American negroes than among any other element of the population. Attempts to Sovietize the negro will end in the same complete fizzle." Continues this Virginia daily:

"Those who are attached to the payrolls of organizations dedicated to the business of maintaining watch over the integrity of our American institutions, never run out of scare material. If it is not an anti-royalist Count that threatens to undermine our Government, it is his wife. If it is not our unassimilated aliens it is our thoroughly assimilated negroes. Anything is grist for the mill of the scare-manufacturers. Their business is to keep the American people sufficiently nervous over the stability of their government to make them shell out a sufficient sum every year to pay the salaries of the professional frightmongers.

"Recently the business of causing the patriots to shake in their shoes



has suffered a slump. It is no longer possible to get a national kick out of the menace of radical labor unions. But the scare-peddlers never run out of material. If they can't find a thing for the national to be scared about, they invent something. Strictly in this category of fabricated frights is the sweat that the security-leaguers and 101-percenters have worked up over the alleged plan of Soviet Russia to bolshevize America's negroes.

"The antics of our security-leaguers over Soviet-negro complots merely serve to detract attention from the real source of danger--ourselves.

"The way to make the negro a better and safer element of our population is not to organize fights upon imaginary alien seducers, but to conduct an intelligent offensive against the real domestic menaces that embitter the negro's life and impel him to occasional acts of rebellion. One of these menaces is the unspeakable lynching practise. Others are execrable housing conditions, under-education, and grossly unfair discrimination in the matter of parks and playgrounds.

"In these menaces lie the only real danger that the American negro may become radical. If he becomes a radical, it will America's fault--not Russia's."

*Literary Digest*, 87 (November 21, 1925): 13-14.

#### 41. EDITORIAL

##### Negro Labor and Communism

When President Green of the American Federation of Labor impatiently issued his warnings to Negroes against the exhortations of the Chicago Labor Congress, he gave official recognition to a movement which, by its nature, could scarcely have survived long, and to an alleged Communist menace that had not disturbed more than a handful of Negroes, and fewer Negro workers. Altho Mr. Lovett Fort-Whiteman with an astute sense for news channels had circulated widely the objectives of the Congress, its grip (whether to the glory or shame of the Negro working man's psychology) was no more secure than that of many such astral enthusiasms which yearly die aborning. It was too much of a panacea, a relief too simple and immediate to tempt the full faith of Negro workers. There were no new or unfamiliar grievances, or anything that had not in one form or another at some time stirred Negroes to protest. They would, for example, fight racial prejudice, Jim Crowism, unequal pay for black and white workers, lynching, discriminations in labor unions, and bring about a united working class. Surely there is nothing subversive in this. They would rally the Negro races of the world against imperialism,--a pardonable even if futile hope. But in the documentation of their grievances, there appeared something that looked dangerously like a real case against a great many of the labor organizations of the country. And so it happened that when out of a heavy and persistent silence came the tremulous voice of organized labor, at least two suspicions became current: (1) that an important motive back of the warning might be found in that same attitude of self-interest which had already been resented in the unions; and (2) that the prompt and unbridled credulity of the press was a tacit recognition of the fact that the harassed Negro workers were fit subjects for most any brand of propaganda, so long as it promised relief. It cannot be denied that there has been agreement among the Negroes will all of the grievances as expressed by the Negro Labor Congress, but an equal indifference to the ultimate measures of relief proposed.

Communism either as a political or economic program, is no more adequately comprehended by Negro than by white workers. If there has been any sentiment toward the group it has been one of sympathy rather than fealty, pity rather than homage. For here was a group, whatever its beliefs, which, like themselves, was not an especially favored class in America. It has seemed peculiar that they should be urged to keep away from a working group that asked merely to call them "brother" by another group which in so many instances spurned that opportunity.

The issues, prematurely born, have been unfair both to Negro labor and to

the labor unions. The workers who have sought a structure for collective action, have asked to share the fate of American workers in their own organizations. And the refusals, the quibbling about jurisdiction, separate locals, apprenticeship sentiment of the workers, strike breaking, alleged lower standards, and incapacity, practiced by many of the existing unions thru a long, dreary period, have been notorious. But on the other hand, the American Federation of Labor under President Green, has shown more concern than has been its wont, and some of the unions, notably the Longshoremen, Hod Carriers and United Mine Workers, have developed cooperation to a point quite beyond any question of insincerity. Meanwhile, the Negro workers continue their age-old double struggle to break the vicious circle of employer and union, which keeps them out of jobs, on the one hand because they are not members of the union, and keeps them out of the union because they do not have the jobs.

*Opportunity*, 3 (December, 1925): 1.

#### 42. INTERRACIAL BANQUET ATTRACTS BIG AUDIENCE

PHILADELPHIA, Pa., Feb. 16.--At an interracial banquet held in Philadelphia last Friday evening, under the auspices of the local council, American Negro Labor Congress, A. Warreno, executive secretary, emphasized the danger of racial hatreds and conflicts during periods of industrial depression such as America is experiencing at the present time. In order to avert such a calamity Warreno suggested that interracial cooperation should be encouraged and broadened in all the large industrial centers of America, particularly among white and Negro workers. "Unemployment is widespread," said Warreno, "and conditions are going to become worse." Secretary Warreno pointed out that the Philadelphia Council, American Negro Labor Congress, is promoting good will and harmony between the races by holding interracial banquets and conferences where the races have an opportunity of making intimate contacts with each other. Such functions, the speaker said, encourage frank and sincere discussions of interracial problems and misunderstanding.

A short survey of the Council's work last year was given by Thomas L. Dabney, who also stressed the importance of interracial cooperation.

"We hear a great deal these days about freedom and democracy," said Dabney. "We are familiar with the struggle of the Negro for the first emancipation. . . . Today white and black workers are engaged in another struggle for the new emancipation."

The old idea that there is a chasm between the races which will always prevent real cooperation and association between them was denied by Dabney, who said that these barriers are largely superficial. The speaker accused certain business interests and cheap politicians for propagating these false ideas of race relations. "The American Negro Labor Congress," the speaker continued, "is convinced that white and Negro workers can live in harmony and peace once they understand that they have common economic problems."

Several other persons, white and Negro, interested in interracial cooperation spoke at the banquet among whom were A. J. Carey, K. M. Whitton, John Anderson and James Price, labor leaders, and Dr. George Chalmers Richmond, prominent liberal minister. A. J. Carey, speaking directly to the workers present said, "There is no reason why we should not unite as one in the struggle of the workers of all races to make a decent living."<sup>111</sup>

Stating that the labor question is international, K. M. Whitten urged united effort of the workers in all lands in order to advance the cause of the working class. James Price of the I.W.W. gave a vivid picture of the present struggle of the Colorado miners under I.W.W. leadership to achieve a decent standard of living. According to Mr. Price the 500 Negro miners involved in the Colorado strike are joining their white fellow workers in this struggle. A collection taken after Price's address was turned over to him to aid the fight of the striking miners. The local Council, American Negro Labor Congress, is also sending all money above expenses from the banquet

to aid the miners strike.

*Pittsburgh Courier*, February 18, 1928.

#### 43. NATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS IN U.S.A.

After three days of serious discussions on the economic, social and political situation of the Negro people of the United States, the first National Negro Congress, held in Chicago, came to an end on December 16th.

The Credentials Committee reported the attendance of 900 officially elected delegates, representing three million people, one-quarter of the total Negro population of the U.S.A.

The Congress adopted a number of important resolutions on lynch law, against fascism, against the attitude of the Congress of the American Federation of Labor on the question of Negro membership in the Trade Unions. Further, a resolution demanding equal rights for women and for young workers and for the increase of relief for unemployed young workers. Of special importance is the adoption of the resolution which was presented by the Negro Pullman Porters Union to the Congress of the American Federation of Labor, but rejected by the reactionary leaders of that organization. In this resolution, the common practice of exclusion of Negro workers from the trade unions is condemned and it is proposed to organize Negro workers' committees to draw in the unorganized workers. A start will be made with the organization of the laundry and domestic workers.

The attacks against the Congress by the reactionary Hearst press (newspapers with open Fascist leanings) created a great feeling of disgust among the delegates, who demonstratively tore up Hearst newspapers in the Congress hall.

The Congress decided to remain a permanent organization and elected a national committee of 75 members and 15 regional committees.

A. Philip Randolph, leader of the Pullman Porters Union was elected President, John Davis, Secretary and Marion Cuthbert, Treasurer.

Finally, the Congress organized a medical relief committee for Abyssinia. The next congress will be held in 1937 in Philadelphia.

In the next issue of "The Negro Worker," we hope to publish the resolutions adopted and more detailed information concerning the Congress.

*The Negro Worker*, 6 (March, 1936): 19.

#### 44. THE NATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS

By Lester B. Granger

It is a paradoxical fact that the National Negro Congress held in Chicago last February provided a powerful impetus toward national racial unity, while at the same time it has stirred up more bitter controversy than any gathering of Negroes since the days of Marcus Garvey's "provisional presidential incumbency."

It was not the first time in recent years that a truly national meeting had been attempted. The Equal Rights Congress at Washington during war days, the Negro Labor Congress of 1925, and the more recent "Sanhedrin" were all attempts to produce a racial gathering from all parts of the country to take counsel on racial problems. Because of previous failures the National Negro Congress was opposed by many sincere persons who felt that this latest ambitious attempt was foredoomed likewise to failure.<sup>112</sup>

Not all opposition came from those who feared its failure, for there were many individuals who saw in the possible success of this movement a future crippling of national organizations already serving the economic and social welfare of Negroes. Still others suspected undue radical influence in the

Congress leadership, while in the same breath suspicions were openly voiced that it was a gigantic anti-New Deal effort financed by the Republican Party or the Liberty League.

Now that the Congress has been held and is over, some of these criticisms are lost, while others have been magnified and intensified. A prelate of the Negro church participated until the closing moments of the final session, then stamped out in high dudgeon, denouncing the entire Congress as atheistic. A Republican national committeeman protested throughout the Congress that it had been sold out to the Democratic Party, and later went back to Washington branding the meeting as Communistic. Various Walter Winchells and Lippmans of the Negro press failed to attend, but deplored the entire proceeding as "Pitifully futile" or as "a remarkable waste of time and money." Meanwhile the Congress delegates went back to five hundred and fifty-one organizations to report on what actually took place in Chicago. Increased racial unity will grow out of the public's reception of these reports, even though that unity grows amid acrimonious dispute.<sup>113</sup>

It is unfortunate that practically all criticism has been aimed at an assumed malign influence in the Congress leadership, or at presumed secret ambitions on the part of its promoters. Almost no critics have analyzed the actual program of the Congress, or enumerated its many virtues, or specifically pointed out its weaknesses--of which there were many. This article is an attempt, not to answer the critics of the Congress, but to interpret its real significance and to point out its possible usefulness to the people in whose service it was called--five million wage earners and heads of Negro families.

To understand the meeting itself, one must know its background. The Congress grew out of a conference on the "Economic Condition Among Negroes" held at Washington, D.C., in May 1935, under the combined sponsorship of the Joint Committee on National Recovery and Howard University's Department of Political Economy. That conference produced disturbing evidence showing that depression and "recovery" trends are forcing Negroes into an even lower economic and social position than they now occupy. Immediate action was indicated as imperatively needed to combat these trends, but it was also recognized that such action must be preceded by a wide education of Negroes in the techniques of group action.

A small meeting after the Conference made plans for calling a national congress to initiate this education and to plan action. Here was the birth of the National Negro Congress, under the organizing genius of John P. Davis, a meeting to include all types of Negro organizations and to devise a platform which would unite them on a program of fundamental issues involving their economic, social and civil security. It was to be a Congress which would cut across political lines and philosophies; it was to be a realistic gathering dealing with bread-and-butter problems; it was to be an interracial meeting giving whites as well as Negroes a chance to help attack a problem which is the problem of all America.

With this background, it was to be expected that the Congress would produce a strange assortment of delegates and a varied conglomeration of political and economic philosophies. Negroes in every walk of life were there--ministers, labor leaders, business men--mechanics, farmers, musicians--housewives, missionaries, social workers. Many whites were present--trade unionists, church leaders, and lookers-on drawn by curiosity. There were representatives of New Deal departments and agencies; old line Republican wheel horses and ambitious young Democrats exchanged arguments; Communists held heated altercations with proponents of the Forty-Ninth State Movement, and Garveyites signed the registration books immediately after Baha'ists.

The Congress produced an amazing attendance past even the most optimistic expectations of its promoters. In the middle of the worst winter in fifty years, the delegates traveled through sub-zero weather by train, bus and auto, paying their own way or financed by poverty-stricken club treasuries. Nevertheless, 800 delegates proffered credentials from 5551 organizations in 28 states, including California, Florida and Massachusetts. On the opening night five thousand men and women jammed the drill hall and balconies of the Eighth Regiment Armory, filled the standing space, and remained from eight in the evening until past midnight. They came back next day at nine and left at midnight. On the closing day they sat from early afternoon until nearly midnight, scarcely leaving their chairs, intent on the report of committees and the final speeches.

Here, it seems to this writer, is the inner significance of the Congress-- a significance which has been missed by its critics. Such a gathering, such enthusiasm, such sustained interest are indicative of a deep-rooted and nationwide dissatisfaction of Negroes that rapidly mounts into a flaming resentment. It is idle to attempt its dismissal as "a Communist gathering." All the Communists in America and Russia could not have inveigled the great majority of those delegates into that trip last winter unless something far deeper than inspired propaganda were driving them. As a matter of fact, delegates were plentiful from the very states where radical parties are weakest.

The Congress was significant, moreover, of the growing importance of labor leadership and of the power of the labor movement. Delegates were present from 80 trade unions, as opposed to only 18 professional and educational groups. The trade union section was the most largely attended and hotly discussed--so much so that it starved the attendance at other important sections. A powerful youth group was present, articulate and aggressive. The church militant was represented on platform and discussion floor, expounding the new social gospel of justice for the underdog.

Criticism of the mechanical operation of the Congress can be most easily justified, for here was evident the committee's lack of promotional funds and the haste of its last-minute preparations. Difficulties were further increased by the armory's inadequate convention facilities and the unstable attitudes of its officials, to say nothing of the mutual suspicion with which rival and dissenting groups regarded each other. Then there was the unpardonably stupid threat of local authorities to close the armory on the opening night because of the discovery of Communist delegates. On the other hand, criticism was freely made that the speakers who were scheduled did not sufficiently represent the different points of view among the delegates.

The true test of the Congress, however, lay in the quality of the resolutions adopted and its plans for making these resolutions effective. The resolutions were uniformly of a high order. To be sure, those on the Church were for the most part full of vague generalities, with the exception of an insistence upon an economic and social as well as a spiritual gospel. Likewise those on Negro business fell into grievous errors of contradiction with resolutions on labor. It is manifestly inconsistent to urge that "all Negroes consider it their inescapable duty to support Negro business by their patronage," without first exacting a pledge that business men will in turn support labor by paying adequate wages, encouraging union organization and following the spirit of other resolutions passed.

Still, these inconsistencies were surprisingly few in view of the intense speed with which the resolutions committee worked during its few hours of existence. Thoroughly sound positions were taken by the Congress for the most part. There can be no quarrel with resolutions that condemn lynching, exploitation of sharecroppers, civil and social discrimination, and the vicious blatancies of the Hearst press. Few will protest endorsement of racial equality in trade unions, organization of Negro workers into unions and cooperatives, and support of the Urban League and the N.A.A.C.P.

Plans for continuance of the Congress seem at this writing completely sound. The local sponsoring committees that sent delegates to Chicago are to be continued as follow-up groups. It is to be their task to sell to the Negro public the fundamental correctness of the resolutions passed at Chicago, and to encourage organizations to incorporate these resolutions into their programs. Sectional chairmen are appointed; labor, youth, and church committees are to be formed; a National Council of seventy-five members will meet in June to follow up the work that remains to be done after Chicago. There is nothing in the program that implies supplanting or curtailment of any existing organization that fights the Negro's battles; rather is the race urged to support these organizations all the more effectively.

Two dangers exist in the future that must be prepared for in the present. One is the tendency of praiseworthy enthusiasm to grow tired or go off on a new tangent. There is the possibility that in many instances the original sponsoring committees may lose their earlier zeal and local racketeers take over the Congress idea, to the detriment of its program. This has often happened, for instance, in "Don't Spend Your Money Where You Can't Work" campaigns. The National Council must be prepared to discover such deviations from policy and to break up rackets promptly.

The other danger lies within the Congress itself--the natural desire of

any organization to perpetuate itself. To do its job properly the Congress must extend over at least a few years and must grow in size and influence. Yet, the older it grows and the larger it becomes, the more it will be exposed to the danger of political control and corrupt bureaucracy--evils which are totally absent today. Definite commitments should be made at once, that the Congress will deal not with political parties but with economic and civil issues, just as was the case at Chicago. Definite goals should be set, capable of achievement within two or three years, and it should be agreed now that when these are arrived at, the Congress will close up shop and disband. By taking these or similar precautions the National Negro Congress, which is already a noteworthy gathering in our racial history, has the opportunity of completing a really constructive job and cementing its place in the brilliant annals of racial progress.

*Opportunity*, 14 (May, 1936): 151-53.

#### 45. THE NATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS (U.S.A.)

By Herbert Newton

Frederick Douglass, that fearless organizer of the anti-slavery forces in pre-Civil War days, in the U.S.A., would have leaped with you had he lived to attend the National Negro Congress held in Chicago February 14-16.

Over 900 delegates attended the Congress. They came from all over the country and from all walks of life. The report of the Credentials Committee based on the first day of delegates' arrival showed an incomplete total of 763 delegates. Of this number 214 came from various civic organizations, 8 from trade unions; 76 from churches of various religious organizations, 70 from fraternities, 44 from various political organizations and 5 from newspapers. These delegates were sent by 551 organizations and directly represented 3,322,093 people or one quarter of the Negro population in the U.S. To a certain extent the Congress assumed an international character as shown by the presence of representatives from Ethiopia, South Africa and the Chinese Soviets.

#### Background of Congress

The Congress took place on a background of capitalist crisis in which the Negro worker was reduced to a below existence wage, unemployment relief was either cut or altogether denied; the Negro women became more fiercely exploited; the Negro youth lost all possibility of any tolerable future; the Negro farmer became immersed ever deeper in debt and misery; and Negro small traders, etc., went smash, with far reaching results, economically and politically.

Any gathering that sincerely attempted to meet these conditions was bound to be widely supported. All the more so because many and varied struggles had taught the Negro masses many valuable lessons. The numerous unemployment demonstrations, the Saint Louis Nut Pickers Strike, the Chicago Sopkins Needle Trade strike, the Amsterdam News Strike, the strikes of Birmingham steel workers and coal miners, mostly Negroes, have taught large masses what organized struggle means. Add to this, the growing sentiment for the amalgamation of craft unions along industrial lines and its organization of the Negro on the basis of equality; the movement against war and fascism, with its defense of Ethiopia; the increasing support for a genuine Farmer-Labor Party; and the liberation movement of the Negroes. Consider also the moral effect of the Scottsboro victory which forced the South for the first time, to include Negroes on its jury rolls, the Herndon victory which thwarted the murderous plans of the Southern Bourbons and inspired every toiler to emulate the courageous deeds of that young fearless fighter.

These conditions gave rise to tremendous mass support for the Congress. It is not surprising therefore, that astute vote-seeking politicians attempting to enhance their political prestige, would give verbal endorsement of the Congress. Thus we see "support" to the Congress appearing in some strange

quarters. Greetings to the Congress came from the Government of two states. Minnesota and Pennsylvania, from the Mayor and City Council of St. Louis and even Edward Kelly, the conservative Mayor of Reactionary Chicago issued a proclamation declaring a Negro week in observance of the Congress and wired greetings from his Florida resort. One California state representative, three Pennsylvania state representatives were regular delegates. And U.S. Senator Borah, opponent of the Anti-lynching Bill, made a desperate though unsuccessful attempt to get the floor. All this goes to prove nothing more or less than wide-spread popularity and support to the Congress.

The liberal magazine "Nation" failing to understand the Negro question as a National question and therefore wishing to reduce the whole complexity of problems involved to the single schematic outlook of economisms, complains:

"This (amalgamation of craft unions into industrial Unions--H.N.) might well have been the theme of the entire Congress. Instead it was one note among many ranging from whole-hearted endorsement of Negro churches to support of trade unionism--just as its delegates range from high church dignitaries to plain workers."

But this, again only goes to prove that the Congress was a Congress of the Negro People.

#### Demands Discussed

A three day discussion in which utmost democracy prevailed, gave an accurate picture of the conditions, struggles and determination of the American Negro. Sharecroppers and tenant farmers from Alabama, longshoremens from the West Coast, coal miners from Kentucky and Pennsylvania steel workers from Georgia and Illinois, together with professionals, intellectuals churchmen and small traders worked out a programme for swinging into action the whole Negro peoples with their white brothers around the following seven basic demands:

1. The right of Negroes to jobs at decent living wages and for the right to join all trade unions. For the right to equal wages and equal labor conditions with other workers, for the organization of Negro workers with their fellow white workers into democratically controlled trade unions.
2. Relief and security for every needy Negro family; and, for genuine social and unemployment insurance without discrimination.
3. Aid to the Negro farm population, to ease the burden of debts, and taxation; for the right of farmers, tenants and sharecroppers to organize and bargain collectively.
4. A fight against lynching, mob violence and police brutality; for enactment of a federal anti-lynching law; for the right to vote, serve on juries and enjoy complete civil liberty.
5. The right of Negro youth to equal opportunity in education and in the economic life of the community.
6. For complete equality for Negro women; for their right, along with all women, to equal pay for equal work; for their right to a suitable environment for themselves and their children--an environment which demands adequate housing, good schools, and recreational facilities; for their right to organize as consumers.
7. To oppose war and fascism, the attempted subjugation of Negro people in Ethiopia, the oppression of colonial nations throughout the world, for the independence of Ethiopia.

Snatched by mass pressure from twenty years living hell on a Georgia chain-gang, Angelo Herndon, prototype of the New Negro leadership, was greeted with thunderous applause when he called for support of himself and the nine Scottsboro boys, as symbols of the Negro struggle against semifeudal oppression. That the Congress understood that it is not alone in this struggle and that it realizes that white workers, too, find themselves victimized by the ruling class, was shown in the greetings and pledge of support of Tom Mooney.

Not confining itself to the problem of workers and poor farmers alone, the Congress also tackled the problem of the plight of Negro artisans, professionals, and small businessmen, and worked out a programme for improving the status of these groups. Even the churchmen met in separate commission and tackled their problems.

## Ford and Douglass

The Congress applauded the proposal for the formation of a Farmer Labor Party. No more fitting person could have been chosen for placing this proposal than W. Ford, formerly secretary of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro workers. For Ford and Douglass are the only Negroes ever to run as vice presidential candidates in any national election. It was Douglass who in 1872 ran on a platform which called for the "formation of an entirely new party whose principles shall meet the vital issues of the hour . . . (and on) . . . a platform so broad as to include every human right."

The deeply felt sympathy for Ethiopia was shown by the ejection from the Congress of Colonel Hubert Julian, traitor to Ethiopia and by the big applause given Max Yergan, and by the settling up of a committee to furnish supplies to the black nation.

## Yergan Speaks

Max Yergan, 15 years a Y.M.C.A. Secretary in Africa, exposed fascism as an outgrowth of imperialism and called for an intelligent and organized resistance of all forces in defense of Ethiopia against Italian fascism. He explained that "the capitalist trusts divide up the spoils and repartition the world among themselves." He further stated that this phase of imperialism has manifested itself in every part of the African Continent. Showing the effects of imperialism he stated that while profits since 1932 have increased 100% and dividends 72%, wages of 200,000 Africans working in the gold mines around Johannesburg and the Transvaal have not had a single increase in the past 30 years. "The lesson of history" he said, is that those who hold power never yield it voluntarily, the only alternative, and Africa's greatest need, is organization along industrial lines."

Significantly the Congress was held on the 119th Anniversary of Douglass' birthday. Significantly also, the gavel that called the opening session to order, was hewed out of the hull of the last African ship that ever carried a shipment of slaves to America.

## Trade Unions Vital Force

The trade union representation to the Congress, while small in comparison to the representation from civic organizations was its most vital force. Of tremendous significance, for example, in view of the Congress' anti-imperialist war stand, is the solidarity of the Italian Local 270 of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and in voting full support and in sending delegates.

Equally important is the election of A. Philip Randolph as the Congress leader. Randolph, formerly a water boy on a road gang, and now President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has successfully led his national Negro Union in a victorious 10 year battle against the Pullman company, a battle as glorious as any that grace the pages of the history of the American trade union movement. Though too ill to attend the Congress, he was unanimously chosen president.

John P. Davis, fiery young Negro intellectual, was elected Executive Secretary as Randolph's assistant. Davis is proof of the rapidly growing cleavage in Negro leadership. One section--the Uncle Tom type--is represented by such men as Kelly Miller, Du Bois, and Perry Howard; the other--the progressive type--by such men as Charles Wesley Burton, Lester Granger, and Rev. Archibald J. Carey, Jr., Davis belongs to the latter. None can say whether these progressives will go the entire distance in the liberation struggle. But now, working in close contact with tried and experienced working class leaders such as James Ford, A. W. Berry, and Harry Haywood, they make considerable contributions to the immediate struggles of the Negro people.<sup>115</sup>

It was Davis, for example, who was most effective in having a motion passed to endorse Randolph's American Federation of Labor (A.F. of L.) resolution which is aimed at smashing trade union color bars. It was Davis, again who raised his voice for the proposals successfully passed, to launch a nation-wide drive in cooperation with the A.F. of L. for the organization of Negro workers into trade unions and to start by the organization of the most exploited strata--laundry and domestic workers--as the dramatic focal point for the organization of all Negro labor.



The Congress divided the country into 15 regions, each to have its own officers working under the direction of a national committee of 75. Local activities are to be directed by the former local sponsoring committees which now take on the permanent character of local federated councils.

#### Government Sabotage

As might be expected the bourgeoisie understood the importance of this Congress and took steps to sabotage it. The U.S. government sent its official stool pigeon and labor spy in the person of Lieutenant Lawrence Oxley of the Department of Labor. And we have the word of the Editor of the AFRO-AMERICAN that "some of the biggest political organizations in the country sent henchmen to Chicago for the . . . purpose of capturing the machinery." That this can't be far wrong is proved by the lament of the three bishops who withdrew from the Congress; by the threat to close the hall if Earl Browder, Communist leader spoke, by the raising of the "red scare;" by Dr. Du Bois' counter-programme with PITTSBURGH COURIER; and by the wailings of Kelly Miller and Perry Howard, the latter the Mississippi Republican committee-man and latest adherent to the Hearst-inspired "Liberty" League, a fascist outfit.<sup>116</sup>

But their howlings will have as little effect now as it did at the Congress. The Negro people of the U.S. having met in convention, having worked out a programme of action and having set up an apparatus for carrying out that programme, will not be deterred.

#### World Congress

Not only that, but this energy and determination, according to the unanimous will of the Congress, is to express itself in the very near future, in participation in an international Negro Congress, one that will unite the Negro peoples of the world on the basis of the defense of their local and international economic and political interests.

SMASH DISCRIMINATION EVERYWHERE! ORGANIZE AGAINST PEONAGE, LYNCHING AND TERROR! CARRY ON THE FIGHTING TRADITIONS OF DOUGLASS! JOIN AND BUILD TRADE UNIONS AS THE FIGHTING WEAPONS OF THE WORKERS! FIGHT FOR MILITANT UNITED FRONT, TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION ALONG INDUSTRIAL LINES! FREEDOM FOR THE NEGRO PEOPLES! FORWARD TO THE INTERNATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS!

*The Negro Worker*, 6 (May-June, 1936): 22-25, 27.

#### THE COMMUNIST PARTY, THE TRADE UNION UNITY LEAGUE,<sup>117</sup> AND THE BLACK WORKER

#### 46. UNION

Not me alone . . .  
I know now . . .  
But all the world oppressed  
Poor world,  
White and black,  
Must put their hands with mine  
To shake the pillars of these Temples  
Wherein the false gods dwell  
And worn out altars stand  
Too well defended.

Langston Hughes

*The Negro Worker*, 4 (July, 1934): 32.

## 47. THE SOLIDARITY OF LABOR IN THE SOUTH

The development of the textile mill strike wave in the Carolinas brings reported evidences of the growing solidarity of labor in the South. This unity must be strengthened in every possible way.

The railroad workers locked the switches, thus preventing the shipment of material out of the struck Manville-Jenckes plant, the metal workers sent fraternal delegates to the strikers' meetings, while other local labor bodies are also taking action. Here is an example for northern labor. Many of the forces in the Carolina strikes are fresh recruits in the industrial war that is now raging. They have not been inoculated with the virus of craft union paralysis. The corruption that is characteristic of the trade union in the North has not reached them. Solidarity is to them a living reality, giving a wide basis for the spreading of the strike struggle and pushing it forward to victory.

This solidarity has smashed the myths that well-nigh seemingly unsurmountable barriers exist between the native Southern workers and foreign-born workers on the one hand, and the Southern native whites and the Negro workers on the other.

The leadership of the National Textile Workers' Union, especially in the strike against the Manville-Jenckes Co. at Gastonia, brings to the Southerners the pleasing realization that the workers of the north, consisting in large part of foreign-born are with them. They greet this unity enthusiastically.

Similarly, there has been no indication of prejudice toward the Negro workers, who have taken their places side by side with the white workers in the new local unions that are being established.

The only danger here is that during the continuance of the struggle, the exploiters, through the many avenues open to them, may succeed in fomenting the prejudice that does not now exist. The employers' agents are already spreading carefully prepared literature on a large scale with this sole object in view. The extent to which these cunning methods succeed, depends entirely on the workers themselves. Workers, native and foreign-born, Negro and white must continue to present a solid wall of resistance to the great capitalist interests that will easily make worse their conditions, intensifying even more the brutal exploitation that now exists, if labor allows itself to be divided along the lines of race and nationality. The class war knows only the working class and the capitalist class.

*Daily Worker*, April 6, 1920.

## 48. THE AFRICAN BLOOD BROTHERHOOD

A Fraternity of Negro Peoples

International Headquarters:

2299 Seventh Avenue

New York, N.Y., U.S.A.

June 18, 1923

Dear Sirs and Brothers;

The bosses have been quick to recognize the opportunities which the Negro Exodus from the South offers for the cutting of wages and strengthening of the "Open Shop" movement. They are doing everything to stimulate the Migration and thus make up for the loss of cheap labor caused by the immigration restriction law. And the Negro workers of the South, existing in a veritable hell of peonage, starvation wages and mob law, are feverishly availing themselves of the opportunity to leave that terror-ridden section. In the six months prior to May 1, 1923, over 100,000 came North. And with the advent of summer the movement has increased considerably.

Organized workers of the North! These unorganized workers pouring North must be reached with the message of Unions! Otherwise the fruits of your labors, the victories won by the unions for their members and for the entire

Labor Movement will be threatened with destruction and nullification. These unorganized Negro workers, ignorant of industrial questions and blind to the necessity of workers' organizations to protect workers' interests, cannot be expected to act intelligently in their own best interests unless YOU, THE ADVANCED WORKERS, come to our aid and help us in the educational work we have been carrying on through the Crusader News Service (the greatest single force in the Negro world today, reaching nearly a million readers weekly); study classes; forums; lectures; etc.; as well as the actual organization work being done by us in the industrial districts.

We ask you to contribute generously to this fight to prevent the use of Negro workers as tools and scabs against Organized Labor--black and white. The enclosed folders tell of our activities. In the past these were supported by our own membership, but faced now with such tremendous tasks we must seek financial aid of white Labor to whom we say "This is your fight, help us wage it!"

Faternally yours,  
THE AFRICAN BLOOD BROTHERHOOD,

Cyril V. Briggs  
Executive Head

International Fur Workers Union Archives.

#### 49. COLOR LINE IN LABOR UNIONS

We declare the interests of the white workers and the Negro workers to be the same, and call for unity and harmony between them. Large industrial employers often stir up friction between the workers of the two races for the sake of dividing the workers along a convenient line, and thus keeping the workers of both races in weakness and subjection.

We call upon the labor unions to let down all remaining bars to membership in their organizations by colored people and all discriminations and distinctions of color within them. We are not blind to the fact that the American labor movement is in a bad condition today, is getting weaker in some instances, and altogether has organized only a small fraction of the working class. The Negro is a large part of the working class of this country, and we declare that the labor unions owe their present weakness in a large part to their neglect of the Negro worker. Hundreds of thousands of Negroes are flooding into the field of industrial labor. We demand of the American Federation of Labor, of the Railroad Brotherhoods and other independent unions, that these Negroes be welcomed into all unions on a basis of equality, and point out that it is for the sake of the white worker as well as the black worker. We demand:

1. That the American Federation of Labor (and all other bodies of organized labor) make an intensive drive in the immediate future to organize Negro workers wherever found, on a basis of equality in the same unions with the whites.
2. That all such labor organizations be fraternally addressed by this body, with the request that such labor bodies shall immediately conduct among their members an official propaganda against discrimination of color and against racial snobbishness in the labor unions and in favor of enrolling all Negro workers into the unions. Further, that such campaign be carried on in collaboration with representatives of the Negro Sanhedrin.
3. That all Negro papers be requested to carry on an intensive propaganda among the race for the joining of labor unions on the basis of equality.
4. In view of the fact that the Negro in industry is as yet an unskilled laborer as a rule, and as the industrial form of union and the breaking down of craft aristocracy in the unions are in the interest of the Negro as an unskilled worker, we therefore favor the transformation of all craft unions into industrial unions. However, we are opposed to dual unionism, as well as

"Jim Crow" unionism, and favor the Negro joining everywhere the main body of labor organization.

*Daily Worker*, February 15, 1924.

50. COMMUNISTS BORING INTO NEGRO LABOR

Taking Advantage of the New Moves Among Colored Workers  
Here to Stir Unrest

Not Much Progress Yet

Ten Young Negroes Are Sent to Moscow Under Soviet  
'Scholarships' to Study Bolshevism

'Nuclei' Sought In Unions

Labor Federation and Older Leaders of the Race Seek  
Antidotes In Real Labor Unions

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*New York Times*, January 17, 1926.

51. STRIKER APPROACHES NEGRO PROBLEM WITH INTELLIGENT OUTLOOK

By Rachel Weinstein

NEW YORK--The question of the Negro as a strikebreaker had become an imminent one. The ranks of the paper box makers were unbroken save for a stray boy or girl who wandered from the line, wavered, but surely came back. Our colored sisters and brothers, however, presented a greater problem.

A solution was sought and, as we thought, found. A committee, composed of two colored girls and two white ones, of which I was one, was selected to visit Harlem and, thru the medium of churches, theaters, dance halls and cabarets, convey the message that was of vital significance in the fight we are waging.

Our success was negative. The churches and similar places of worship were all difficult of access. We were sent away with promises and assurances of further interest in our subjects, etc., but we were not permitted to make our appeals there and then. One church, indeed, accepted us and even went so far as to read the message to the congregation.

## See Thru Shadows

However, so far as I was concerned, the days' experiences were of totally different significance. For the first time in my life I came in actual contact with the Negro people. I talked, walked and laughed with them, and was delighted with them. I seemed to have been reawakened. The people were alive, moving, breathing, not dark shadows on the horizon of my life. We visited one home with a view to obtaining a speaker for an evening performance at a theater. I talked with the lady of the house for a few all-too-short minutes and went away a slave to her charms, her vivid personality. I succumbed completely. Her color, her race, everything was forgotten in the pleasure of her conversation, her presence.

The barrier that formerly loomed so large in my eyes has dwindled away to nothing. It no longer exists.

Harlem is a vast, comparatively unexplored area. The boys and girls, ostracized for no other reason but that of difference in color, are unorganized, untaught in the matter of workers' solidarity. Employed by unscrupulous manufacturers to break the ranks of their white sisters and brothers, they are fed on poisonous propaganda which eats their minds and hearts and antagonizes them to the point of slashing blindly, at the smallest provocation, at those who attempt to stop them on their way out of the shops simply to talk to them. These, our sisters and brothers, are the innocent victims of a social system so unspeakably vile, so contemptible, that one stands amazed at the realization of its existence.

## Sowing to Wind

A party of friends, far superior intellectually to many white people were once forced to leave a well-known restaurant because of their color. "These tables are all reserved," was the reply they met with on requesting accommodations. Similar incidents occurring daily, hourly in the lives of these people, tend toward uniting them still more strongly in their hatred for the color, which took it upon itself to lord it over them and which so cruelly manifests the difference which they presume exists.

Is it any wonder that those lower in the social order and of lesser intelligence are only too eager to take advantage of a strike to come back at us? Is it to be wondered at that our strike is a tool for revenge eagerly sought and unhesitatingly reeked upon those of our boys and girls unfortunate enough to be the victims?

Our organization, far from recognizing color barriers, accepts into its ranks everyone, regardless of race or creed. Our colored boxmakers are as active as the white, as tireless in their efforts to finish this bitter struggle victoriously. Our union plans to organize all boxmakers, regardless of color or creed.

*Daily Worker*, October 30, 1926.

## 52. PROBLEMS AND STRUGGLES OF THE NEGRO WORKERS

By Richard B. Moore

Importance of Negro Masses for the Labor Movement and  
the Revolutionary Struggle in America

Negroes number over 12 million. There are one-tenth of the total population and one-seventh of the workers. They are the most exploited section of the proletarian masses of this country being doubly oppressed both as workers and as a subject race. Potentially, therefore, they are the most revolutionary proletarian elements and constitute a fertile field for Communist propaganda and organization. Moreover, the development of American imperialism draws the Negro masses ever more into the forefront of the class struggle. Specific factors which operate to make the Negro workers an organized and integral factor of the labor movement and the revolutionary struggle are:

1. The movement from the farms to the industrial and commercial cities.



The extent of this movement will be seen from the following figures:

In 1890 the percentage of Negroes living in rural districts was 80.6, that in cities 19.4; in 1920, 66 and 34. From 1900 to 1929 Negro city population increased more than a million and a half while the Negro population of rural areas increased less than 72,000 or about 1 per cent. The greater part of this movement occurred from 1910 to 1920 during which decade the Negro city population, making a total increase of more than 2,100,000 for the 25-year period--a growth of over 100 per cent. From 1900 to 1920 the Southern cities increased by 886,173 while the Northern and Western cities increased by 671,292. On a percentage basis, however, the gain in the North was 105 per cent as against 65 per cent in the South. More than 3 1/2 million or over one-third of the Negro population lived in cities by 1920. In 1920 there were six cities, 3 Southern and 3 Northern cities which had a population of over 100,000 Negroes. These are Baltimore, 108,382, New Orleans, 100,930; and Washington, D.C., 109,966; and New York, 152,467; Philadelphia, 134,229; Chicago, 109,458. As we shall see next the Negro population of these northern cities have increased considerably since 1920.

2. The migration from the South to the Northern industrial centers. It is estimated that between 800,000 and 900,000 Negroes came north during the two recent great mass migrations of 1916 to 1919 and 1921 to 1923. The first of these movements was due primarily to the demand for labor during the world war, the latter to the labor demand due to restricted immigration. The contributory causes were severe economic exploitation in the South, insecurity of life due to lynchings and mob violence, insecurity of property caused by high mortgage and interest rates, crop failures due to boll weevil and floods, unemployment, Jim Crow laws, poor school facilities, oppression in the courts, disfranchisement, and the terrible conditions in Negro segregated districts. These Negro workers went into industry for the most part into steel, mining, automobile, needle and other industries. In the mining industry, the report of the U.S. coal commissioner shows that 42,489 Negroes were employed out of a total of 525,152 workers. These figures suffice to show the growing industrialization of the Negro workers and their importance for the labor movement. It should be noted that the great steel strike of 1919 was broken by the capitalists because it was possible for them to draw upon the Negro masses whom they consider as strike-breaking reserves to break this strike, in one of the most basic industries. In the mining strike, thousands of Negroes were likewise imported. They were not told that they would be employed or that a strike was on. In the needle workers' strikes and in the paper-box makers' strike this same tactic has been used by the bosses. More and more it is their practice to utilize Negro workers against white workers and to pit white workers against Negro workers to undermine the standards of both and to maintain the exploitation and degradation of the entire working class. The role of the Negro masses in the revolution which abolished chattel slavery should demonstrate the importance of the Negro masses for the proletarian revolution of America. It is impossible to conceive of a successful social revolution without the Negro masses, who played the decisive role in the civil war of 1865 and who will again play a very important role in the coming social revolution.

3. The industrialization of the South. The South is being rapidly transformed from an agricultural into an industrial section. Steel, mining, textile, and other manufacturing industries are being rapidly developed owing to the absence of restrictive labor laws and a cheap and docile supply of white and black workers. Negro workers are being drawn in large numbers into the heavy industries.

4. Limitation of immigration. The decline in immigration will be seen from the following figures reported by the Bureau of Immigration: in 1910 a million and 41,570 immigrants entered the United States. This number fluctuated slightly until 1914 when 1,218,480 came. In the next year only 326,700 were admitted, the number falling as low as 110,618 in 1918, and increasing slightly to 373,511 in 1923. A greater demand for Negro workers in industry is the result.

*Daily Worker*, June 7, 1929.

### 53. NEGRO WORKERS PLAY VITAL ROLE IN CHARLOTTE T.U.U.L. CONFERENCE, FOSTER SAYS

Full Equality of Negro, White Workers Shown in Conference;  
Capitalist Reporters Raged

Whole Program, Conference Shows Readiness  
of Southern Workers for Stiffer Struggle

William Z. Foster, general secretary of the Trade Union Unity League, interviewed in New York after his return from the Trade Union Unity Southern Convention in Charlotte last Sunday, and the Southern Conference of Textile Workers, also in Charlotte Saturday, reports the two meetings of delegates representing the tens of thousands of workers, were huge successes, and certain to initiate the greatest organization drive ever seen in the South, accompanied by a struggle particularly in the textile industry against conditions that are unbearable and are growing worse.

Particularly important, in the conference of over 300 delegates sent from locals of the National Textile Workers' Union, and from all mill committees and organization groups in the unorganized mills, was the close unity and recognition of class equality among Negro and white workers.

#### Negroes, Whites Together

"Negro workers sat down before the hall was full in the Charlotte meetings," said Foster, "and immediately the white delegates already in the meeting went over and fraternized with them. Not only that, but the Negro delegates rose and spoke from the platform to the accompaniment of much applause from the white delegates, on the necessity of social equality of races among workers, and of a united struggle against the common enemy, the employer.

"The Southern press representatives surrounded me in throngs, and cross-examined me on our theories about the Negroes. They advanced all the stale old arguments about 'natural inferiority of colored races,' the 'evils and inefficiency of racial mixtures,' and asked me with horror, 'Do you believe in the amalgamation of races?'"

#### Solidarity of All Workers

I pointed out to them that the races amalgamate, whether they like it or not; that as soon as the barriers to communication and isolation of the races are broken down, there is a mixture of races. I proved by examples from their own midst, that despite the old prejudice against "squaw men," every man now, and there are many in the South, who can prove he has a little Indian blood in him, proceeds to boast about it. I told them we were for solidarity and social equality of all workers.

"The capitalist reporters were so mad they almost choked.

"The terror against the N.T.W. is accompanied by a barrage of propaganda against racial equality, and against 'Reds.' But this is the talk of the capitalists, the employers. The delegates to these conventions proved by their actions that they are not afraid of either of these things, not anything like as prejudiced against them as the Southern bosses would like them to be, would like the world to think they are."

#### Main Facts Established

The main facts brought out at the Charlotte conferences, said Foster, were:

1. That the N.T.W. and the T.U.U.L. had thereby established a number of the very best connections with thousands of mill workers and workers in other industries.
2. The good representation showed that the N.T.W. - T.U.U.L. drive in the South has real volume to it, and marks a huge advance over the situation considered very favorable then, prevailing at the recent Bessemer City conference.
3. The discussion showed that the conditions in the textile industry

were not only simply horrible, but are rapidly growing worse, with new wage cuts, more speed-up, more terror, and worse living standards.

4. The delegates showed that the Southern workers' opposition to the A.F.L. and the United Textile Workers is very bitter. They do not for a moment forget the treacheries practiced on them by the U.T.W. misleaders in the last strike, and they are beginning to hear of the betrayals of labor in Elizabethton and Marion, Ware Shoals, and other scenes of U.T.W. activity.

6. The southern workers pin great hopes on the new militant unions. The hysterical shouts of the bosses about "race equality," and "dangerous Reds," don't turn them away.

6. The Negro workers played a strong role at the conventions--something never seen before in the South.

7. There was an atmosphere of readiness for struggle against the bosses. A whole concrete program was laid out for building mill committees, and local unions of the N.T.W., also local general leagues and local industrial leagues of the T.U.U.L. in all important industrial centers, and personnel was canvassed, and assigned to specific tasks to bring about this organization.

8. The defense of our imprisoned fellow workers now on trial in the Gastonia case, and the struggle against bosses' terrorism, against fascism, permeated the whole of both conventions.

#### Program of Action

In addition to adopting a long program of action, and declaration of principles (previously summarized in the Daily Worker) the Southern Textile Workers' Conference adopted resolutions on organization, on the unionization of Negro workers, on the rationalization and speed-up practiced by the bosses in all industries, and the approaching war danger.

Referring particularly to the murder of Ella May, the Marion Massacre and the black-hundred activities of the Gastonia mill bosses, the resolution on organization says:

"The textile bosses' offensive against the textile workers has reached a new stage. In the past the mill barons have held our wages down and our hours up through the eviction, the blacklist and the power of the press. But today, when the stretch-out is on the increase and we are producing one hundred to two hundred per cent more production than several years ago, the bosses are attempting to stop our organization of the industry with gunmen, the police, the electric chair, the militia and their black hundreds." <sup>119</sup>

It goes on to point out that this terror does not stop the workers from organizing, and refers to the united front of the bosses, the press and their flunkies, Senator Simmons and Governor Gardner of North Carolina, "who support the textile workers like a rope supports a hanged man," and the U.T.W. controlled by a little group of highpaid officials. The U.T.W., it points out, is a company union.

#### Textile Program

The National Textile Workers' Union, however, is a real workers' union, controlled by its rank and file workers, and fighting for them. It is necessary, in order to carry out its purpose, recognizing the class struggle, to put into effect the following program:

1. The creation of a special fund to organize every mill in the South.
2. We have enlisted and are training a staff of Southern worker-organizers in all principal mills and textile centers, but must increase this greatly.

3. We must establish sub-district offices within the next few months in Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, Tennessee and in other parts of North and South Carolina to strengthen the work of the organizers already functioning in these sections.

4. More organizational activity will have to be carried on in the rayon section of the industry.

5. We must work out a clear program for social insurance of all kinds. The present workmen's compensation laws are almost useless. We must use all election campaigns, organization campaigns, and mass pressure to secure insurance, to be paid by the bosses and their government.

## Bosses Use Race Issue

"The mill owners of the South have been trying for years to keep the Negro and white workers divided. For years they have been saying that they will never mix their labor. Mill owners have a definite purpose for doing this--in order to extract more profits from the workers. They know that if the workers are divided one against the other, white against black, there can be no common struggle against the bosses," says the resolution on organization of Negro workers.

"The mill owners are not interested in the white workers welfare as opposed to Negro workers. They are interested only in profits."

The resolution describes the oppression of the Negroes as double oppression, both as a race and as a class. It declares:

"The N.T.W.U., realizing that the interests of the Negro and white workers are the same, that the interests of all workers, regardless of race, creed or color, are the same, that they all suffer from the same oppression, robbery and plunder, cannot and will not permit the mill owners to divide the ranks of the working class. The N.T.W.U. pledges itself to organize all textile workers black and white, in a militant industrial union, and to carry forward a militant struggle against all oppression and exploitation of the Negro and white workers by the mill owners."

## Rationalization

The resolution on rationalization and the war danger points out that speed-up, stretch-out, unemployment, long hours and low pay are getting worse. The employers control all state and national political offices, and prove by such acts as those in Gastonia and Marion what state power is used for. The working class, which produces the wealth, is getting increasingly lower wages, longer hours, and worsening conditions. Less than 3,000,000 of the 27,000,000 workers are organized and most of them into conservative, highly skilled unions.

The resolution hails the Cleveland convention as showing the way out by a program of militant unionism, based on the unskilled and semi-skilled masses, the factory workers especially.

## War Danger

The war danger arises from the conflict of the overstuffed master classes in each country, struggling for the same markets, sources of raw material and cheap labor power.

The workers of the world are called upon to join hands and fight all these robber groups, and to defend the Soviet Union, menaced by all of them. It ends: "The Trade Union Unity League is the center that can direct the struggle of the working class against speed-up, stretchout and the coming war of the imperialist rulers."

*Daily Worker*, October 18, 1929.

## 54. THE NEGRO WORKERS AND THE CLEVELAND UNITY CONVENTION

By Henry C. Rosemond

(Vice-President of Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union)

I have found it necessary as a trade unionist and a militant worker to face many instances of the ruthless capitalist system in the trade at which I have been working for many years, as well as in taking part in the strikes in which our aims were the better living conditions for our fellow-workers. I wish to urge all Negroes of my trade, as well as all Negroes in other trades, to support the coming Trade Union Unity Convention being held in Cleveland. This convention will embrace many angles of the Negro problem here in the United States which the A.F. of L. has never touched, since it is a part of the terrific and miserable conditions and oppressions that the Negroes are suffering.

## A.F. of L. Treachery

It has been proven more than once that the A.F. of L. was not in favor of organization of Negro workers and in the places where Negroes are a factor in different industries, they establish Jim Crow locals, dealing always with the idea of white "superiority." I have also noticed that the few Negroes in these various unions under the leadership of the A.F. of L. who manage to have a voice are still compelled to remain in the far background and expose an inferiority complex in order to remain in these circles. The Needle Trades Industrial Union, of which I am today an executive member, has more than once shown, not only in the acceptance of Negroes into the union and into its leadership that it was one of the most progressive in the United States, but also shown an interest on the side of the Negroes in fighting openly the discrimination of the old leadership of years ago under the direct control of the A.F. of L.

## Trade Union Unity

The Cleveland convention will be the first step toward the establishment of a real trade union unity in the United States, securing complete racial, social and economic equality, controlled by workers for the benefit of the workers, and will always fight militantly and break down the barriers of the capitalists, for the betterment of the working class.

Therefore, the Negro workers, being the most exploited workers here in the United States, exploited as Negroes and as workers, we must once for all realize the need of a full and complete collaboration with our brother white workers in embracing the struggle against the ruling class for the extermination of capitalist oppression, which can be overthrown only by the complete unity of the workers of all trades, races and creeds.

*Daily Worker*, May 21, 1929.

## 55. NEGRO MINERS MUST ORGANIZE; MILITANT UNION IS ONLY PROTECTION

Build The New Miners Union<sup>120</sup>  
By Isaiah Hawkins

There are tens of thousands of Negroes working in the mining industry. In many mines the Negro workers are predominating. The number of Negro miners has grown especially since the last coal strike, when large numbers of Negroes were brought in together with white strikebreakers to take the place of the striking miners. In most cases these Negro workers were never told of the existing labor troubles in the coal fields.

The coal operators were importing scab labor not because of special love for them, but because of necessity, because of the then existing labor shortage and the difficulties to get the necessary number of workers to replace the striking miners. This is readily seen from the fact that no sooner was the strike weakened than the Negro miners were being discharged by the operators and one could again see the display of the infamous signs--"Only White Miners Need Apply," or "Only White Miners Wanted." There are numerous mines where a Negro miner could find no employment, just because he is a Negro. Without a strong organization of the miners, there is no way of compelling the coal operators to do away with this brutal race discrimination.

During the strike the Negro Miners, who were members of the miners union, were fighting valiantly for their union, for their right to organize, against wage cuts and for the improvement of the working conditions. They were fighting shoulder to shoulder with their white brother miners and at least just as courageously as their white brothers. However, in some ranks of the Negro miners there still exists a prejudice against the union. Some of the coal operators are carrying on special propaganda to show that it is in the interests of the Negro miners not to have a union at all.

The constitutions of the American Federation of Labor and of the old UMWA made no discriminations between blacks and whites. In reality, however, the Negro miners felt the discrimination against them on every turn. Suffice it to mention the fact that during the recent strike the UMWA kept hundreds of organizers in the fields of Western Pennsylvania. Among this army of organizers only one or two were Negroes. Yet, every child knows that in western Pennsylvania there was a sad need for Negro organizers, who in many cases could be of special service to the cause of the strike.

Divisions in the ranks of labor along the lines of race, color, or nationality are injurious to the cause of labor. Only the coal operators and the reactionary labor officials are interested in keeping the ranks of labor divided. It is much easier for the coal operators to cut wages and workers than working conditions with the ranks of labor divided. The employers are especially interested in keeping the Negro workers down, so that they will be compelled to work at lower wages and will make the organization of labor unions much more difficult. This is why the bosses encourage lynchings, Jim Crowism, race discriminations in housing, restaurants, theatres, public institutions.

Only by organization by united action of white and Negro workers, can the barbaric medieval system of race discrimination be done away with. United action between the white and Negro workers is absolutely necessary in order to carry on a successful struggle against wage cuts and slave working conditions.

The National Miners Union welcomes all miners, regardless of race, color or nationality, in its ranks. The Negro miners, especially, are called upon to join the National Miners Union, to take active part in the union affairs and to participate actively in the union leadership on a basis of full equality with their brothers in the union.

*The Coal Digger*, February 1, 1929.

#### 56. WHY EVERY NEGRO MINER SHOULD JOIN THE N.M.U.

By William A. Boyce, Vice-President

No longer than a year ago the sentiment among the miners was "Something must be done." All those of a militant spirit were urged to do that something. I, for one, felt that I owed it to myself, to my fellow workers and to my race, most especially, to do something which might be of benefit to us all. When the fighting Save-the-Union Committee began to spread its news the majority of miners listened with anxious ears for the message of the Committee was genuine and correct. We entered that movement heart and soul, and remained in the front until the tide turned and the National Miners Union, fighting determined and militant, appeared upon the horizon.

#### Champion of Oppressed

The Negro miners can well hail, together with their white fellow workers, the National Miners Union, as an organization that means more to the Negro miner than any that has ever existed in the U.S.A. before. Every Negro should join the National Miners Union because it fights vigorously for full economic, political and social equality for them. It fights discrimination, segregation, Jim Crowism and disfranchisement. In the N.M.U. the Negro miners have a valiant defender.

The old and dead U.M.W.A. had in its Constitution "There shall be no discrimination against a fellow worker on account of creed, color or nationality, etc." There isn't a Negro miner in America that doesn't know the above words didn't amount to anything, not worth the paper they were printed on, for in deeds discrimination was rank everywhere.

#### U.M.W.A. Discriminates

When a Negro looks for work in the mines, many of them cannot stick their

heads in, while those that do get work are given, usually receive the worst place in the mine, dangerous and unfit to work in. In the old days, when he would apply to his local for redress, the local would send him to the district, the district would send him back to the local, who in turn would refer it again to the district, who then might say they will take it up with the International office! So went the ducking and shifting. And that was the last ever heard of the "grievance." To ask a Convention delegate anything concerning these conditions he would reply that Lewis would not permit any racial questions to be discussed. Why, I ask, should the Negro miner be a part to, or support a machine, or help support an organization in which he finds no voice or protection?

#### Gets Worst Jobs

In the mining town where there are company houses--the Negro gets the worst, but pays the same amount of rent just the same. The dirtiest, filthiest of work is given to them. They are hounded, persecuted, ostracized and discriminated. Is it a wonder the Negroes are bitter? But my Negro brothers must learn, as the white worker must learn as well, it is the tactic of the employer to keep the black and white separated for then he can beat down both at will.

#### No Division

Lewis and Company did not and do not want the Negro miners. It is a matter of record that UMWA hoodlums broke up various NMU meetings in the Pittsburgh District, shouting, "You have niggers with you, yes," because there were Negro speakers on the platform (Isaac Munsey, Vice-President, N.M.U., Pittsburgh, Pa.). But the N.M.U. wants the Negro miners. We are all workers, our sufferings are alike, our division is because of the tactics of the employers and the stupidity of some white workers. The N.M.U. has its face set like granite against wrongs to our people. To build the N.M.U. means building a bulwark of defense to the Negro miners.

The Negro miner is an integral part of the mining industry. It is the policy of the N.M.U. that he should not only be a part of the industrial division, but of the Executive Department itself. A special representative of the Negro miners sits as a member of the Executive Board of the N.M.U. to guarantee our people representation. In the N.M.U. the Negro is not a dues paying member, silent, bulldozed, discriminated, but an active, leading part of the directing councils of the organization itself.

#### Into the Union

I have faith in my Negro brothers that when he is convinced the above is the actual situation, then he will be as good, if not better, a union man as the next one. When he see representatives of his race in the field organizing them, in official capacities and otherwise, standing shoulder to shoulder with the white workers--then he will know a new day is here for the Negro miner. So it is, in the N.M.U. The N.M.U. is asking him not only to help build, but help control.

Negro brothers! Join our ranks! Build the Union to defend yourselves. Help us fight against the wrongs done to our people. Join forces with the militant, class conscious white miners in the N.M.U. Help make it strong and powerful for your own protection.

*The Coal Digger*, January 10, 1929.

#### 57. LABOR ENTERS NATIONAL DRIVE TO SAVE ATLANTA ORGANIZERS

NEW YORK--Plans for the full mobilization of the workers in the struggle against the anti-labor warfare being carried on by the bosses all over the country, which has already resulted in nearly 5,000 arrests this year, has

been announced by the International Labor Defense.

The "Defense and Liberation Drive" launched by the I.L.D., has as its central point the fight against the death sentences being planned for the six Atlanta organizers, Powers, Carr, Storey, Burlak, Newton and Dalton. They were arrested for organizing Negro and white workers into the same unions and advocating social equality and are being charged with "insurrection" under an old slave law, which demands the death penalty. The trial is expected to be called in September.

The Atlanta bosses, in their effort to stem the tide of working class revolt against starvation, seek the burning of these organizers on the electric chair, and have been launching one terror organization after another like the Blackshirts and the Holy Crusaders. Workers thruout the country and everywhere in the world are being mobilized by the international organization to combat the bosses' murder scheme.

A special drive is also being made among the rank and file members of the A.F. of L. whose officials Nance and Marquardt, helped in obtaining the charge against the organizers. Every A.F. of L. local in the country is being circularized with a resolution by the I.L.D. demanding the immediate and unconditional freedom of the Atlanta comrades. In view of the fact that the members are becoming more and more disgusted with the treachery of the officials, it is expected that many locals will overrule the petty officials and the instructions from the central bodies and pass the resolution, forwarding them to the prosecutor's office in Atlanta and to the press.

#### Struggle Against Terror

The campaign will include the struggle against the terrorism of the bosses as exhibited on September 1, in Birmingham against lynching and for the release of all class-war prisoners.

*Southern Worker*, September 13, 1930.

#### 58. A TRADE UNION PROGRAM OF ACTION FOR NEGRO WORKERS

The Negro toiling masses are subjected both to capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression--they suffer as members of the working class and of an oppressed race. In this or that country the one or the other form of oppression predominates.

In the U.S.A. the Negro toilers are mercilessly exploited, on the cotton plantations and in the mines, factories, and workshops of the Southern and Northern States. They are being deprived of full civil rights, and are forced to live in overcrowded houses, in restricted sections of the cities. They are helpless victims of racial prejudice and antagonism fanned by the bourgeoisie, they are subjected to lynch-law and mob rule, and do not get even the kind of "justice" which is being meted out to their white brother toilers.

The low standard of living of Negro workers is made use of by the capitalists to reduce the wages of the white workers. The misleaders of labor, the heads of the reformist and reactionary trade union organizations are refusing to organize Negro workers and thereby are helping the capitalist masters to drive a wedge between the white and colored proletarians. This anti-Negro attitude of the reactionary labor leaders helps to split the ranks of labor, allows the employers to carry out their policy of "divide and rule," frustrates the efforts of the working class to emancipate itself from the yoke of capitalism, and dims the class-consciousness of the white workers as well as of the Negro workers driving the latter into the arms of the church and petty-bourgeois nationalistic societies, such as Garveyism and the like.

The Negro toilers as well as the white workers in the industrial countries must bear in mind that only united in the ranks of the general labor movement can they achieve their freedom. As to the Negro workers, their fight for emancipation from race oppression is clearly, in the main, a fight against capitalist exploitation. In this fight for emancipation attention should be paid to the Negro peasantry of the Southern States of USA. Agitation should



be carried on among them against capitalism and racial oppression connecting this agitation with the economic demands of the Negro farmers.

In a somewhat different aspect is the position of the Negro toilers of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. In Africa the majority of the Negro population is still living a primitive tribal life. Here the imperialist invader, by expropriating the communal lands, by heavy taxation and by all kinds of oppressive legislation, is forcing the natives to supply cheap labor for the farms, mines and other industrial undertakings of the capitalists. This process of proletarianization, whilst breaking up the old tribal life, at the same time subjects the natives to a miserable existence under conditions which are hardly distinguished from plain slavery.

In order to safeguard the domination of the handful of white masters, the huge masses of the toilers in these colonial and semi-colonial countries are artificially divided into several social castes subject to different laws. We have in South Africa, for instance, the natives, the most degraded caste, then come the so-called colored races, and above them the "poor whites." The common class interests are being obscured by this color differentiation and instead of organizing a united front against their common class enemy, the workers are fighting each other, strengthening in such way the position of the capitalist class.

The struggle of the Negro workers for liberation is insolubly bound up with the wider struggle of the international proletariat, and the Negro workers must line up in the revolutionary class organizations the world over, by organizing their forces for joint struggle. In order to help the establishment of such a united front between the Negro toilers and their fellow workers, in order to liberate the Negro workers from the influence of reactionary nationalistic petty-bourgeois ideologies and draw them into the lines of the international revolutionary class movement, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the RILU issues and asks the Negro workers to rally to the following program of organization and action:

1. *Equal Pay for Equal Work:* Negro workers as a rule are working at lower wages than white workers. In South Africa the wages of native workers are from 4 to 5 times lower than the wages of European workers in most fields of work; in America the constant lowering of the wages of Negro workers, the employment of Negro workers only upon their acceptance of lower wages than the white workers, not only means the lowering of their own standards of living, but the standards of living of other workers as well; in the West Indies, in Cuba, on the sugar plantations, etc., Negro workers toil for a few cents per day. In order to raise the standards of living and subsistence of Negro workers it is necessary to struggle for equal pay for equal work, regardless of race, color or sex. At the same time the Negro workers, together with all other workers, must wage a common fight for higher wages, raising the general standard of living of all the workers.

2. *An Eight-Hour Day:* In most industries and at all kinds of work, the Negro workers toil from 10 to 12, and in some parts of the world even 16 hours per day. One of the main tasks of the Negro workers must be to obtain an 8-hour day and ultimately, together with the rest of the working class, a 7 and a 6-hour day.

3. *Forced Labor:* Close to the struggle for an 8-hour day is the question of Forced Labor. In many parts of the world Negro workers are forced to toil, in some cases, for no wages at all, "for community improvement." In the West Indies, at point of the bayonet of U.S. marines, native workers have been forced to build and upkeep roads. They have been driven from Haiti into Cuba to work on the sugar plantations; in South Africa forced labor takes the form of contract labor, natives being conscripted and recruited in Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa) and transported long distances to work in the mines of South Africa; they must live in compounds and cattle pens. This system is legalized through the so-called "Mozambique Treaty," which exists between Portugal and the South African Government. In French Equatorial Africa the system of forced labor is so brutal that it resulted almost in the complete annihilation of the native population. In the U.S.A. forced labor does not exist in the same form, but in the southern part of the U.S.A. many agricultural workers work under a system of peonage; in some states of the South of the U.S.A. Negro convicts are forced to work in the coal mines and on plantations. It is against this system of camouflaged slavery that we have to wage an incessant fight. We must do away with the "Mozambique

Treaty," with peonage, forced and convict labor, "Corvee Labor," contract labor or whatever other name this modern slavery is being disguised under.

4. *Labor Legislation (Insurance, Etc.):* As one of the means of raising the living standard of the workers we must demand the adoption and enforcement of insurance laws that provide for the care, at the expense of the employers, of all workers in case of unemployment, accidents, sickness and also the paying of old age pensions and death benefits.

5. *Protection of Women and Youth:* The ITUCNY demands adequate protection for women and young workers, equal wages, equal benefits and proper working conditions. Vacations for expectant mothers before and after confinement, with full pay and leave periods during the working day after returning to work for nursing the babies.

6. *Freedom of Trade Unions:* We fight for the right to strike, for the right to organize in trade unions, for the right of free speech, wherever these rights do not exist.

7. *Against Class Collaboration:* We must wage a militant fight against government coercion, compulsory arbitration, company unions; against all reformist class collaboration.

8. *Against Racial Barriers in Trade Unions:* The first requisite for a victorious struggle is a hundred per cent organization of all Negro workers in trade unions. We must therefore conduct a relentless fight against racial bars in some of the existing white unions, the opening of the unions to all workers regardless of race and color.

9. *Special Unions of Negro Workers:* Where special bars are not removed, and where white unions refuse to admit Negro workers, special unions of Negro workers must be organized. Also, in white unions where Negroes are admitted but are treated as second-class members with unequal rights and privileges, special unions must be organized.

10. *Against White Terrorism:* We must carry on a resolute fight against terrorism in all its forms--against lynchings, police and soldier terrorism, against the assassination of trade union leaders and social workers, against their arrest and deportation.

11. *Housing and Social Conditions:* The housing and social conditions of Negro workers in the industrial centers are among the worst in the world. We must demand that adequate attention be paid to the protection of the health and well-being of the Negro workers and their families, and that better houses and social surroundings be provided for.

12. *Agricultural Workers:* Worst of all is the condition of Negro agricultural workers. Agricultural workers must be organized into trade unions which must fight for the special demands of agricultural workers including shorter hours, social legislation, protection for women and children of the workers, etc., etc.

13. *Against the Confiscation of Peasant and Communal Lands, Against Poll and Hut Taxes, Against Per Capita Tax, Etc.:* A special problem is the land question and particularly the agrarian policy of the South-African Government. The confiscation of the land of the natives and its reservation for white settlers in different parts of Africa, and confiscation in the West Indies tends to create landless peasantry which is forced to seek work on the white farms and in the cities. The position is yet more aggravated by the policy of levying hut and poll taxes, making the competition for work more acute and the level of wages lower still, and bringing about a worsening of conditions in general. We must therefore fight against confiscation of native land and for the restitution of all land confiscated in the past to the native communities, as well as for the abolition of all special taxes and laws which result in the driving of the peasants from the land.

14. *Universal Education:* To reduce the amount of illiteracy among the Negro workers and their families and to raise their cultural standards, free universal primary and secondary education for the children of the workers and special courses for adult workers must be provided for. At the same time we must demand the abolition of racial segregation in educational systems.

15. *Civil Rights:* A basic task for agitational and organizational activities necessary as the first step in our main struggle against imperialism, is to achieve the abolition of all racial discriminations, abolition of "Pass Laws," and all other laws, and regulations abrogating the rights of the Negro workers, and to achieve universal suffrage, freedom of speech, freedom of

workers' press. All "Color Bar" and caste systems existing in South Africa and the West Indies, which tend to split the ranks of the workers, must be abolished wherever they exist.

16. *Self-Determination of Negroes*: In South Africa, in the West Indies, and in the Southern part of the U.S.A., the trade unions of the Negro workers must become the central organs and transform the economic struggles of the Negro workers into political struggles, into a combined economic and political struggle for power and self-determination.

17. *Fighting the Influence of the Church and of Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois Ideas and Movements*: We must combat the influence of the church, of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies and movements. The church, by offering to the Negro worker and peasant for the miseries they are enduring in this world, compensation in heaven, are befogging the minds of the Negro workers and peasants, making them a helpless prey to capitalism and imperialism. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas and movements, such as Garveyism, etc., detract the Negro workers from their fight hand in hand with the international working class, for their emancipation from the yoke of capitalism and imperialism.

18. *The War Danger*: The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers directs the attention of the Negro workers of the world to preparations for the next world war, which are now being made by the imperialists, on the one hand against the Soviet Union--the fatherland of workers and oppressed peoples--at the same time, it goes without saying that the imperialists are in armament races for a war amongst themselves for a re-division of the colonial and semi-colonial spheres of influence. This not only means unheard of economic burdens upon the back of Negro workers, but also the terrible destruction of the lives of Negro soldiers recruited from among the workers and peasants. To understand what Negro workers must pay in the next war one only has to recall the last war with the consequent killing of hundreds of thousands of black troops who were fighting in the armies of the imperialists. The black troops had nothing to gain by fighting for the imperialists, and after the war was over, Negroes not only received most terrible oppression in the imperialist countries and colonies, but whole colonies of Negro people were placed in virtual enslavement. At the present moment the imperialists are training "black armies" for the next war, and are utilizing black troops to suppress the struggles of workers (in France), and against the Chinese workers in China (by Great Britain).

The Negro workers of the world must struggle against this menacing war danger; they must mobilize their forces against the imperialists using black troops against the workers.

We must rally to the support of our fellow workers.

We must defend the Soviet Union!

*Issued by International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of R.I.L.U.*

*The Communist*, 9 (1930): 42-47.

## 59. SOME EXPERIENCES IN ORGANIZING THE NEGRO WORKERS

By Earl Browder

In view of the tremendous tasks facing the revolutionary movement in organizing the Negro workers together with the white workers in the revolutionary unions, it is of value to secure as much knowledge as possible of past experiences in this direction. Especially is this clear when we realize that past experience bears out recent events in the South, proving that "racial prejudice" is an artificial thing deliberately cultivated by the employers, and that it can quickly be broken down, and the white and Negro workers can be, and have been, mobilized in fraternal working class solidarity for common struggle.

The following story of events in Chicago in 1919, was furnished to me

by Jack Johnstone, at that time secretary of the Stock Yards Labor Council, in the form of his personal recollections and in newspaper clippings and leaflets.

The race riots in Chicago, in 1919, were organized by the white bourgeoisie, in an effort to enforce an unofficial segregation of Negroes who were being drawn from the South into industry in large numbers, especially in the stock yards. They took place at a time of sharp class struggles all over the world--the time of the first German revolution, and the slaughter of the German workers by "Bloody Noske" the socialist; of the imperialist intervention against the Soviet Union; of the general strikes of Winnipeg and Seattle, in America, and the great movements of the steel workers, miners, and packing house workers. The masses of workers in the American Federation of Labor were, in spite of and against their bureaucratic leaders, developing militant struggles. The race riots of Chicago were a part of the counter-offensive of the capitalist class against the rising tide of working class revolt.

In July, 1919, the employers of Chicago instigated and encouraged a movement to drive the Negro workers out of certain residential sections by violence, making use of bombing of Negro homes to terrorize them and drive them into "Negro districts." The aim was to impress upon the Negro workers that in the North, as well as in the South, from which they had recently come, they must "know their place," the place of "loyal" slaves of white masters; to establish the dogma of racial inferiority, with lower wages for the Negro workers than for the whites, with worse unsanitary housing conditions; to divide the white and Negro workers; to imbue the white workers with a false feeling of superiority, and whip them into mob violence against the Negroes. This aim, a classical example of imperialist methods of dealing with oppressed peoples and the working class, was carried through by the bourgeoisie in many cities, above all in Chicago.

That this movement was consciously supported by the ruling capitalist circles, is amply demonstrated by an extract from an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune*, July 2, 1919, which said:

"Regardless of the validity of the claims of the whites, it is a matter of fact that these claims do exist, the whites do resent the appearance of colored people in white neighborhoods and the resentment does, whether justly or not, work a change in the neighborhood feeling and in property values. We may as well look the facts squarely in the face and we ask the colored people to consider them."

The ringleaders in the capitalist conspiracy were the Packing House capitalists (the "Packers," for short). The largest part of the Negroes were in the packing houses, and the riots were designed to destroy the unions. For months prior to the outbreak, the Stock Yards Labor Council had recognized the serious threat directed against it by the situation being deliberately created by the employers, who had their agents working among both white and Negro workers.

#### White and Negro Agents of the Bosses

First in importance of the bosses' agents among the workers were the officials of the A.F. of L. craft unions affiliated to the Stock Yards Labor Council; these constituted less than 10 per cent of the total membership, the main bulk of which was butcher workmen, or unskilled workers, whose union took in Negroes on a basis of full equality. These craft union officials, by their discrimination against the Negro workers, furnished the basis for the agitation among the Negroes against all unions with white workers, even though the Stock Yards Labor Council organized all Negroes, of whatever craft, into the general organization when they were excluded by the craft unions.

The Negro agents of the bosses were not from among the workers. They were such elements as the secretary of the Negro Y.M.C.A., and two Negro aldermen of the second ward, who were on the payroll of the Packers. One of them, Alderman L. B. Anderson, appeared before the government Food Administrator, Alschuler, ostensibly on behalf of the Negroes, but in reality for the Packers, to oppose the recognition of the Union. The Packers, through their paid Negro agents, even went so far as to organize a Negro company union, which issued the following proclamation:

"GET A SQUARE DEAL WITH YOUR OWN RACE"

"Time has come for Negroes to do now or never. Get together and stick together is the call of the Negro. Like all other races make your own way, other races have made their unions for themselves. They are not going to give it to you because you join his union. Make a union of your own race, union is strength. Join the American Unity Packers Union of the Stockyards, this will give you regard to work at any trade, or as a common laborer, as a steamfitter, etc. A card from this union will let you work in Kansas City, Omaha, and St. Louis, or any other city where the Five Packers have packinghouses.

"This union does not believe in strikes. We believe all differences between labor and capital can be arbitrated. Strikes is our last motive if any at all."

"GET IN LINE FOR A GOOD JOB."

(Signed) "American Unity Packers of the Stockyards."

The Stock Yards Labor Council opposed the agents of the bosses with a program of organization of the Negroes, with a guarantee of equal rights. Inter-racial dances and other social affairs were organized. Any Negro barred from one or other of the A.F. of L. craft unions, could join any local of the Butcher Workers. A Negro was elected vice-president of the Stock Yards Labor Council, and there were seven paid Negro organizers, who were: Ball and Robinson, two Negro organizers from the United Mine Workers; John Riley, an engineer; A. K. Foote, vice-president of the Council; a steam fitter, barred from the steamfitters' union; Robert Bedford and I. H. Bratton, butchers; and a Negro woman (name unavailable at time of writing) from the Women's Trade Union League.

The Stock Yards Labor Council carried on a constant struggle with small craft unions which barred Negroes, to force them to abandon all discrimination. This struggle for equal rights culminated during the race riots, in the adoption of a resolution by the Council, expelling from the Council all unions which refused to accept the Negroes on a basis of full equality.

#### The Struggle in July and August

It was under these conditions, plus the atmosphere created by the race riots in Washington and other cities, that the Stock Yards Labor Council decided in June, 1919, to intensify the campaign to draw all Negroes into the Union. Street-corner organization meetings were organized. The Packers used mounted police to ride into these meetings and break them up. The Stock Yards Labor Council called a protest strike, which was only settled by the workers winning the right to speak on the streets, and by the removal from the district of the police officer in charge of the aggressions, Captain Caughlin. Thousands of Negro and white workers joined the Union. The climax of this campaign was to be a parade of Negro and white workers, through the Negro neighborhood, on July 6, which was nicknamed the "checkerboard parade."

At the last moment before the parade took place, the police issued an order forbidding it, on the demand of the Packers and the Negro politicians, on the grounds that it might provoke a conflict. The Stock Yards Labor Council made one of its serious mistakes by failing to defy this order of the police; instead, whites and Negroes paraded separately, coming together in a joint demonstration in Beutner playground at LaSalle Street and 33rd Street. There took place an enthusiastic demonstration of solidarity of 25,000 to 30,000 Negro and white workers.

On July 27th, the employers played their trump card. White agents, with faces blackened to appear as Negroes, set fire to and burned a block of houses inhabited by white stockyard workers, mostly Poles. Immediately the employers threw a large force of militia, police, and deputy sheriffs, into the stock yards, and their agents spread among the white workers to incite them to violence against the Negroes.

The Stock Yards Labor Council called a mass meeting, which was held at 50th Street and Oakley, attended by 30,000 white workers. The meeting unanimously and enthusiastically declared its solidarity with the Negroes. Even the capitalist *Herald-Examiner*, reporting the meeting, was forced to give the keynote of the meeting as contained in the speech of J. W. Johnston, secretary of the Council, who said:

"He (the Negro) has the same privileges in organized labor as you have. It is up to you to protect him. The non-union Negro is being brought into the yards by the Packers, he must be brought into the Union. There is no color line in this Union, and any man who attempts to draw one violates the Union code and has no right to protection."

The meeting voted to strike, demanding the withdrawal of all the armed forces from the stock yards. This strike-vote was endorsed by the 4,000 Negroes in the Union. White and Negro workers went on strike together, and stayed out until their demand was met.

The presence of militia, police, and deputy sheriffs in the stock yards was for the purpose of covering the organized assault made by the Packers' agents upon the Negroes, and to participate in the pogrom started by these agents. All that had gone before, bombing of Negro homes, the killing of two Negroes early in July, was but a prelude. The militia and police were used to disarm the Negroes; while the white pogroms were given a free hand to kill Negroes. There were 2,800 militiamen thrown into the Negro districts. Not one white man was killed or wounded by police and militia, but at least a half of the Negro casualty list were killed or wounded by the police and militia. In spite of this one-sided struggle the Negroes defended themselves exceptionally well.

The Stock Yards Labor Council held its 35,000 white and Negro workers on strike, in solidarity with the Negro workers, demanding the withdrawal of the armed forces, and the return of the Negroes to the Yards under the sole protection of the Union. This sustained demonstration of inter-racial solidarity played a large part in bringing the riots to a close. During the whole time, no considerable number of white workers in the stock yards were involved in the assaults upon the Negroes; on the contrary, the 35,000 organized white and Negro workers stood solidly together--the one bright spot on a black page of American history, the race riots--carnivals of murder--organized throughout America in 1919 by the capitalist class.

Acting from working class instinct, without revolutionary theory and therefore with many blunders, yet the Stock Yards Labor Council had made a real contribution to the development of revolutionary trade unionism in the United States, on one of its most important problems, the organization of the Negro masses together with the whites in close solidarity.

#### The Betrayal By the A.F. of L.

With the close of the riots, and the return of the workers to the Yards after the withdrawal of the armed forces, the Packers and their agents organized a new assault, an even more vicious one, against the Stock Yards Labor Council.

The capitalist press led the way, with a campaign of accusation against the Council that it (the Council) has been the cause of the pogrom against the Negroes.

The Packers followed by discharging 400 white workers, the Union shop stewards, who had led their departments on strike.

The Government, through the Food Commissioner, Alschuler, condemned the Union for striking in support of the Negroes.

Finally, the National Secretary of the Butcher Workmen's Union (A.M.C. and B.W. of N.A.), Dennis Lane, who had disappeared from the city during the pogrom (like Mayor Thompson, another "friend" of the Negroes!), reappeared upon the scene. He condemned the officials of the Stock Yards Labor Council as "Bolsheviks and I.W.W.'s" and expelled the Stock Yards Labor Council from the Union with its 30,000 members.<sup>121</sup>

This mass expulsion, because of left-wing policies, was the first of its kind in America in the post-war period. It was endorsed by the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, and the Chicago Federation of Labor was instructed to throw out the delegates of the Stock Yards Labor Council.

At that time the Chicago Federation of Labor headed the "progressive" tendency within the A.F. of L. It defended the position of the Stock Yards Labor Council. But finally, in order to save the Chicago Federation from being also expelled, it was mutually agreed by Federation and Council that the latter should withdraw, and that the Federation should continue (as it did) to give its support to the Council.

This weak and mistaken policy of the Federation and the Council was characteristic of that period. All who took part in those struggles were without any well-developed revolutionary theory or program of action, with the result that the most serious mistakes were constantly being made. The left-wing socialists, then in the process of forming the first Communist Parties, were entirely outside the struggle. The I.W.W. isolated itself on principle. The little group of militants in the A.F. of L., who had left the socialist party for the syndicalist movement, were, while more practical in the current struggles, still entirely without a correct revolutionary program or perspective.

The result of these expulsions, and the lack of aggressive struggle against them, was the destruction of the militant union of the Stock Yards Labor Council. It was killed by the treachery of the A.F. of L. officialdom, who could not forgive its achievement of solidarity of white and Negro workers against the capitalist class; but the A.F. of L. officials could not have succeeded in killing it, if the Stock Yards Labor Council had been able to fight under a clear, theoretically-grounded, Bolshevik leadership.

#### Joint Struggle of Black and White

The outstanding lesson of 1919, in Chicago, is that all the obstacles to unity and solidarity between white and black workers came, not from either group of workers themselves, but from the enemies of the working class--from the capitalist press, from the bosses, from the bourgeois politicians (white and black), and from the reactionary A.F. of L. officialdom.

Not at any single moment was there any resistance from workers, white or black, to the policy of equality, of solidarity, of the Stock Yard Labor Council.

The Negro workers, while their bourgeois race leaders were crawling on their bellies before their white paymasters, defended themselves, remained solidly with the Union, and refused to go back to work except under the direction of the Stock Yard Labor Council.

It was 30,000 white workers who struck solidly, against the employers, the government and all its forces, and against their own highest A.F. of L. officials, in solidarity with their Negro brothers.

From both white and black workers, there was unanimous and conscious joint struggle for a common program against the reactionaries of both races, but above all against the white capitalist class and its agents.

These experiences proved, just as today the National Miners' Union, the National Textile Workers' Union, and all the sections of the Trade Union Unity League are proving that there is no deep division between white and black workers, that racial prejudice are artificial cultivations of the capitalist class, designed to break the solidarity of the workers, but which can and must be completely smashed in order that the working class may unite all its forces, of all races and colors, men and women, youth and adults, for its common struggle against the common enemy.

This story was told by Jack Johnstone to a meeting of strikers in the Murray Body plant in Detroit a few months ago, when a young Negro comrade had asked if the Chicago race riots were not caused by a fight between union white workers and non-union Negro workers. The young Negro comrade asked Johnstone to write up the story. Johnstone has been too busy since then with organizational and strike work to do the job. The present writer has been glad to volunteer to do it for him, in the firm belief that it will contribute to the fulfillment of our present task of organizing Negro and white workers for joint struggle, for a common program.

*The Communist*, 9 (1930): 35-41.

#### 60. INVESTIGATION OF COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA, 1930

##### Testimony of Asa P. Randolph (Colored)

(The witness was duly sworn by the chairman).

The Chairman. What is your full name?

Mr. Randolph. Asa P. Randolph.

Mr. Bachmann. What is your occupation, Mr. Randolph?

Mr. Randolph. I am president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping-Car Porters.

Mr. Bachmann. How long have you been president of that organization?

Mr. Randolph. About five years.

Mr. Bachmann. And what was your occupation prior to that time?

Mr. Randolph. Editor of the *Messenger* Magazine.

Mr. Bachmann. How long did you edit that magazine?

Mr. Randolph. About 10 years.

Mr. Bachmann. You live here in New York City?

Mr. Randolph. I live in New York City.

The Chairman. Now, will you proceed in your own way and give us any information at your disposal in regard to the activities of communists among your group of people. You are not a communist yourself?

Mr. Randolph. No.

The Chairman. Will you give us what information you may have of the activities of the communists, whether it is of recent origin, whether it is increasing, how it is affecting your people, and so on. Just take your time.

Mr. Randolph. Well, I would say that the communist activities among negroes began about the same time that they began among the whites; not on as large a scale, however. The beginning of the communist movement was not as aggressive, probably, as it now is. In the last year and a half, I should say that the activities have increased among the negroes throughout the country. As to the number of negro communists, I cannot speak with any certainty. I think you have but a very small number of negroes who are actually in the communist movement. I should say that probably there has been an increase in sympathy and sentiment among negroes for the communist movement in the last year and a half or more.

The Chairman. Do you know the reason for that? Is it the fact that orders have come over from Russia to intensify the campaign among negroes within the last year?

Mr. Randolph. I think that the communists in America among negroes are acting under orders from Moscow.

The Chairman. Do you know specifically whether orders have come recently to that effect--that it must be accentuated among the negroes?

Mr. Randolph. I read in the papers to that effect, that specific orders have come recently and that the activities have increased and they have become more aggressive. Now, I want to state specifically about my organization and the activities of communists in relation to our group. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was organized in August, 1925, in New York, for the purpose of getting more wages and shorter hours of work for the Pullman porters. At that time the Pullman porters received \$67 a month and were working about 400 hours a month, and the sentiment among the men was to have an organization affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

Mr. Bachmann. You are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor?

Mr. Randolph. We are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

The Chairman. Are you secretary of that organization?

Mr. Randolph. President. The Pullman porters now receive \$77.50 a month. Now, in 1928 we projected a strike maneuver. On June 8 we planned to execute a strike among the Pullman porters in the interest of getting the demands that we had set forth. When this strike program was initiated, the communists attempted to penetrate the various divisions of our organization throughout the country, with a view to either capturing the organization or wrecking it.

Mr. Bachmann. Now, let me ask you right there: When you say they endeavored to penetrate your organization throughout the country, the points of their penetration were only in New York and Chicago; is not that true?

Mr. Randolph. What do you mean--points of penetration?

Mr. Bachmann. Well, you said the communists were trying to penetrate your organization throughout the country.

Mr. Randolph. Yes. Well, in most of the districts they were active.

Mr. Bachmann. Well, were there any other places outside of Chicago and New York?

Mr. Randolph. Oh, yes. In Kansas City, Oakland, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Washington---

Mr. Bachmann. Detroit?



Mr. Randolph. Washington, D.C., so that there were many points where they were active. Now, they went to our various organizations in various districts and attempted to make them feel that they had the power to win the strike and they were going to set up relief stations when the strike occurred; they were going to collect money in the interests of the strike, and, of course, our various organizers did not know about the communists. They did not know who they were and what their program was, and it was only due to the fact I knew something about their activities, knew the nature of their activities, their strategy, motivity, and technique, that I was able to warn our various organizers against them, through telegrams and immediately ordered the various organizers to drive them out and have absolutely nothing to do with them.

The Chairman. Is it not a fact you have had some association in the past with the radical movement?

Mr. Randolph. Yes.

The Chairman. And that is how you happen to have this knowledge?

Mr. Randolph. Yes; that is how I happen to have this knowledge.

The Chairman. Did you use to be a communist yourself?

Mr. Randolph. No; I used to be a socialist.

The Chairman. A socialist?

Mr. Randolph. Yes. They attempted to establish their connection with the group, but, by taking the matter in hand immediately, we were able to cast them out; although recently, here in New York, they have made attacks on our movement. I have some exhibits here of their activities in the various meetings that we have held. They have come into the meetings and, at certain times, they would have members of their group stationed in different parts of the hall and when the program proceeded to a certain point, why, they would rise and proceed to introduce confusion [handing papers to the chairman]. So that our organization is practically the only organization among the negroes which is attacked by the communists. They have sought to break up the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters because we are part of the American Federation of Labor and because they were not able to capture the movement.

The Chairman. How many Pullman-car porters have you in your organization?

Mr. Randolph. We have about 8,000 members in our organization. We are not yet recognized by the Pullman Co., but that is the fight of the movement--to secure recognition from the Pullman Co.

The Chairman. What can you tell the committee about the American Negro Congress?

Mr. Randolph. The American Negro Labor Congress is the official organization of communists among the negroes for propaganda of the communist doctrines. It was organized a few years ago and it is headed by very capable and aggressive young negro men; on the average, I should say they are about as capable as the whites and they are very, very aggressive.

Mr. Bachmann. Do you know what is the membership of that organization?

Mr. Randolph. I think the membership is very small. I doubt if it runs into, oh, say, a couple hundred--

The Chairman. Do you know where the money comes from?

Mr. Randolph (continuing). But, of course, the membership does not represent the extent of the organization, you know.

Mr. Bachmann. I understand.

Mr. Randolph. Because they have a sort of closed membership, as Mr. Leary pointed out, as a dues-paying group; but, as a matter of fact, the group is much stronger and much more extensive than the membership implies.

Mr. Nelson. How many Pullman porters have refused to join your order?

Mr. Randolph. Well, there are about 12,000 Pullman porters in the service.

Mr. Nelson. And you have about 8,000?

Mr. Randolph. We have about 8,000--the large majority.

The Chairman. This American negro labor congress has a letter-head and the names of the officers are given, and the board of directors or organizing committee of about 60. Are you familiar with them? I will present it to you, with the names of these men who are on that committee, and ask whether the most of them are here in New York [handing the paper to witness]?

Mr. Randolph (after examining paper). I am familiar with some of them. Cyril Briggs is of New York; Otto Hall is not of New York--I think he is of the West; Otto Huiswoud is of New York; Richard B. Moore is of New York; James W. Ford, I think, is of Chicago.

Mr. Bachmann. Was Ford a Pullman porter?

Mr. Randolph. No. These are not Pullman porters.

Mr. Bachmann. I was asking whether he was. Do you know what his occupation was before he got into this movement?

Mr. Randolph. I think he was in the Post Office; I think he was in the Postal Service. Sol Harper is of New York, formerly of Schenectady and Syracuse, I think. Those are all of the negroes I know.

Mr. Nelson. You must have talked with a good many of these fellows. What do they say and what is the appeal to them in this?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I might say, as a general thing, there is discontent and unrest among the negroes as a whole throughout the country, and that unrest and discontent arises as a result of the existence, I believe, of a recrudescence in lynchings at the present time. Then you have, also, the existence of widespread peonage in the South.

Mr. Nelson. Does that exist, do you think, to any considerable extent?

Mr. Randolph. Oh, yes; to some extent, especially in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, and other sections. Then you have the disfranchisement of the negro, where they do not have the privilege--though being citizens and having fought to save the country in every war of the Nation--and are not permitted to vote in the country for a Government that exercises control over them. Then you have, for instance, the recent matter of the gold-star mothers, which the negroes throughout the country resent from the point of view of discrimination and segregation, although I have been told by Hon. Alderman Moore that the conditions under which the gold-star mothers went to France were very good; that the accommodations were splendid.

The Chairman. That was what I was going to ask you, because I think that perhaps is not a function of the committee, but I could not understand the newspaper accounts of it, unless the discrimination was that they did not have proper quarters and a proper vessel to go on. We up here in this section believe, as far as that is concerned, that they were entitled to the same accommodations as given by the Federal Government to other people.

Mr. Randolph. Yes.

The Chairman. But there was no discrimination in the accommodations?

Mr. Randolph. No; no discrimination in the nature of the accommodations, but I might say the objection of the negroes to that form of segregation is based upon the same principle that they object to being segregated and discriminated against on the cars; that is, they object to the Jim Crow car.

The Chairman. Yes. Of course you remember, and I remember, too, that the colored soldiers who went into the service or volunteered, or even those who were drafted, went over as colored regiments, as units in colored regiments.

Mr. Randolph. Yes.

The Chairman. And I do not know that they could make very much complaint, at this late day, about the mothers of those boys, who went as a colored regiment, going together. But, if it is a question of accommodations, I, for one, would like to know about it.

Mr. Nelson. This gentleman is not making a complaint, as I understand, but he is answering my question as to what is the general feeling and general sentiment among colored people in this country. That, I think, is advisable, to get the psychological situation.

Mr. Randolph. Yes. Then there is the matter of industrial discrimination, regardless of the efficiency of the negro worker, regardless of the capability of the negroes. For instance, the negro boy on coming out of high school or college is just as capable as white boys, but there is a distinct limitation to the rise and progress of that negro boy, based solely on the fact he is a member of the Negro race.

The Chairman. Are they shut out of the hospitals here as doctors?

Mr. Randolph. They are shut out of some of the hospitals as doctors.

The Chairman. Do they have colored hospitals here?

Mr. Randolph. Well, they have some sanatoriums operated by negro doctors. Now, of course, negro doctors are in the Harlem Hospital; that is, they work in the Harlem Hospital. That has come about, recently, under the new administration.

Mr. Chairman. The complaint is largely in the professions, is it not, that they cannot rise?

Mr. Randolph. In the professions and industrially, also. For instance, there are the negro industrial chemists that do not get the opportunity to exercise their ability; there are negro carpenters. For instance, only 3 per cent of the carpenters of America are negroes; although negroes have the ability to carry on that work and opportunities ought to be afforded them to exercise that ability; also, educational opportunities.

The Chairman. That is due to the American Federation of Labor, is it not?

Mr. Randolph. No; I do not think so; because the discrimination against negro workers is larger in open shops than in shops that have union control. There is discrimination in some of the unions, of course, against the negro workers, but I do not ascribe that to the American Federation of Labor proper; because the American Federation of Labor proper does not regulate the constitutional provisions of the various international unions. There are certain international unions that do discriminate against negro workers joining them.

Mr. Nelson. Now, as regards those grievances of the colored people (and many of them are very real), the communist agitator promises to do away with all of them?

Mr. Randolph. The communist agitator capitalizes those conditions.

Mr. Nelson. And they promise, with the inauguration of their regime, that all men shall stand equal?

Mr. Randolph. Right, sir; that is, there is that program. And I might say that the communists have a paper known as the Negro Champion.

The Chairman. When is that issued?

Mr. Randolph. You have a sample of that there.

The Chairman. Where is that published?

Mr. Randolph. I think that is published in New York. I am not so sure, but I know it was published in New York.

The Chairman. Is that the only one you have?

Mr. Randolph. The only one among negroes.

The Chairman. Do you know where the money comes from that keeps up a paper of that kind and also keeps up the American Negro Labor Congress?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I think they all get the money from the same source as the whites, whatever that is--I think from the Russian Government, from Moscow.

The Chairman. Do you know anything about colored American citizens being sent to Moscow to study over there?

Mr. Randolph. Yes; I know of a number of instances where young negro men and women have been sent to Moscow to study and then they have come back as agitators to propagate the communist philosophy.

The Chairman. Do you know whether any of them have been sent from New York City--any that you know personally?

Mr. Randolph. Yes; I do. There is one man by the name of Patterson, who is a lawyer, who has gone over and he has not returned; and, from Chicago, there have been a number of young men and women sent to Russia.

The Chairman. I want to take occasion to state that, acting in the capacity of chairman of this committee, I have issued subpoenas for about 20 of those members of the board of directors of the American Negro Labor Congress.

Mr. Randolph. Yes.

The Chairman. Assuming that they were all communists, and wanting to have them appear here.

Mr. Randolph. Yes.

The Chairman. We were unable to serve the subpoenas. We want to give those men an opportunity to express their views before this committee; we are not seeking to persecute or to prosecute them but are seeking to have the views of the negro communists before the committee; but, so far, we have been unable to locate them.

Mr. Nelson. How many colored people are there in New York City?

Mr. Randolph. Well, it is variously estimated. I suppose the next census will definitely show, but they say there are from two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand.

Mr. Nelson. How many of those would you say are communists?

Mr. Randolph. Oh, I should say, in the Communist Party, I doubt that you have 50 who are members of the communist organization.

Mr. Nelson. And how many are active as propagandists?

Mr. Randolph. That is just an estimate. I should say that you would have about half a dozen, or a dozen active propagandists.

Mr. Nelson. Where were you educated?

Mr. Randolph. New York City; the City College of New York.

The Chairman. Are you a native American?

Mr. Randolph. Yes; I was born in Florida.

The Chairman. Is there more activity among the West Indian negroes than among the native American negroes?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I do not know. I think that you have about an equal split. For instance, this man Patterson was an American negro, who has gone over to Russia. He is a lawyer, and some of the most prominent of the negro communists are American negroes, and they about equal up.

Mr. Nelson. Did you ever live in Boston?

Mr. Randolph. No; I never lived in Boston.

Mr. Nelson. You have the accent of Boston East Beacon Hill.

The Chairman. You say there are about 50 in the Communist Party. Here are the names, I think, of 65 right here.

Mr. Randolph. Well, all of those are not negroes. I do not think.

The Chairman. Can you show any white men on that list? I think it is called the American Negro Labor Congress.

Mr. Randolph. Yes; they call it the American Negro Labor Congress.

The Chairman. You do not know of any white men on that list?

Mr. Randolph. I do not know; but those that I mentioned are negroes.

The Chairman. You do not know the name of any white man on that list?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I do not know of any white man on this list.

The Chairman. I do not think you will find any on it. I think there are 65 names, and I think they are all negroes and most of them of New York.

Mr. Randolph. It is quite possible, though, that there would be white men on this list with the negroes for the purpose of helping them to carry on the movement. I doubt if all of those are negroes.

Mr. Bachmann. What is the procedure followed by the communists to attract your group to this movement?

Mr. Randolph. Well, they employ meetings in halls and they have street meetings and they disseminate literature among the negroes, especially where situations arise such as strike. Now you will take, for instance, in Sunny Side and Mott Haven yards, of the Pullman Co., the communists stand out near the gates and give the Pullman porter the Daily Worker and sometimes the Negro Champion.

Mr. Bachmann. Now, after they attract them to the movement, what is the procedure?

Mr. Randolph. Well, after they are attracted to the meetings, why the communists proceed to tell them that the present order of society is unsound and present generally the communist philosophy, and also proceed to exploit the various grievances of the negroes--for instance, the present condition, such as lynching and things of that sort and exposing the negro leaders and denouncing various representatives of other political organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor that is active.

Mr. Bachmann. Can you say whether you have information where they have some of the white women who assist them in a way to attract negroes at those meetings?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I do not know about that. Of course, you have the communist men and women coming to these meetings, and I have simply stopped at these meetings and listened to them; I have not gone to any of their hall meetings; I have not had the time; but I know generally just what they do and the methods they employ. In Atlanta, now, they have a little communist group there, which was quite a surprise to me; when I went down there to lecture to some colleges I found the communists.

Mr. Bachmann. Where was that?

Mr. Randolph. Atlanta, Ga. I found there was a little communist group in Atlanta; not very large, but apparently quite active.

Mr. Nelson. On what subjects do you lecture?

Mr. Randolph. Why, in the colleges, on economics, history, sociology, psychology, and things of that sort, especially presenting the labor angle of the question of the negro worker, and also setting forth the work of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

The Chairman. Who is the actual head of the communists among your group here in the city of New York?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I think that probably Richardson B. Moore is the most prominent here in New York.

Mr. Bachmann. Ford is very active, too.

Mr. Randolph. Ford, I think, is not in New York at the present time; I think he is in Chicago. We held the National Negro Labor Conference in Chicago last year, and the communists came into the meeting and attempted to capture some of the meetings. We were to have Mr. Matthew Woll to speak at the Sunday afternoon meeting and they heard about that, so they came there and began to distribute their literature attacking Mr. Woll, attacking Mr. Green, and attacking myself. However, they were not permitted to remain in the meeting very long, because they were put out.

Mr. Bachmann. There is no question, is there, Mr. Randolph, that those of you who understand this movement, through your organization are well able to combat it?

Mr. Randolph. Oh, yes. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has grappled with the communists, and we routed them and practically destroyed their movement so far as it relates to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. They do not molest us any more now in the way of coming to our meetings.

Mr. Bachmann. You do not feel, do you, they are making much of an inroad into your organization?

Mr. Randolph. Oh, no; they are not making any inroads into our organization.

Mr. Bachmann. The movement is on the decrease there rather than on the increase at the present time?

Mr. Randolph. Oh, yes. We had our struggle with them, don't you see; our struggle was rather intense at the time; but we were able to overcome them and to route them.

The Chairman. Now, can you tell the committee anything about Mr. Cyril Briggs?

Mr. Eslick. Let me ask one question first; the representatives of the Communist Party approaching your organization, are they negroes, white men, or both?

Mr. Randolph. They are both.

Mr. Eslick. Both?

Mr. Randolph. Yes.

The Chairman. Can you tell the committee anything about Mr. Cyril Briggs, who is the national secretary of the American Negro Labor Congress?

Mr. Randolph. Yes, I know Mr. Briggs. He is a writer; he does not do very much speaking, but he is a very capable writer and has been quite active in the communist movement from the very beginning, I think, and is located here in New York.

The Chairman. Is he associated with the paper you referred to as being a communist paper?

Mr. Randolph. The Negro Champion--yes; I think he is.

The Chairman. Is he the editor of that?

Mr. Randolph. I think he is the editor of that. You will see it in the heading there.

The Chairman. Therefore he must have an office here in New York?

Mr. Randolph. Yes; he has an office here in New York.

The Chairman. And could be reached and a subpoena served on him?

Mr. Randolph. Yes. He has an office somewhere here.

The Chairman. And what does Mr. Otto Huiswoud do?

Mr. Randolph. Mr. Otto Huiswoud is one of the organizers of the communist group here. He was one of the beginners of the communist movement in the country.

The Chairman. Has he an office here?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I think he has some place where they do their work; but they have no real office where you have---

The Chairman. There are no negro communists general headquarters where they hold their meetings--rooms?

Mr. Randolph. Well, they hold their meetings here in certain places. They were located on One hundred and thirty-fifth and Seventh Avenue, in the new building right above the Chelsea Bank.

The Chairman. Is that the Rockefeller Building up there?

Mr. Randolph. No; it is a place over the Chelsea Bank. They were there; I do not know whether they are there still or not. They go from place to place and usually operate on the street corners.

The Chairman. What does Mr. Richard B. Moore do?

Mr. Randolph. Mr. Richard B. Moore, I think, is the leading spirit in the communist movement here now. He was nominated for one of the city offices on the communist ticket recently.

The Chairman. Has he any profession or vocation?

Mr. Randolph. Well, I do not know of any profession that he has. He gives all of his time, I think, to communist activities.

The Chairman. Do you know whether Herbert Newton comes from New York or not; do you know him?

Mr. Randolph. I do not know where he comes from; I never heard of him before.

The Chairman. I think he is the man who went over and notified Mr. Foster, in jail, yesterday of his nomination for governor on the communist ticket.

Mr. Randolph. Oh, yes;; I see.

The Chairman. You do not know him?

Mr. Randolph. I do not know of him. Then they have some of the negroes of education and culture who give some sympathy to the communistic activities, and some of them have sought the opportunity to go to Russia--not so much, I think, because they wanted to return to carry on communist activities in America but because they simply wanted to get the opportunity for a trip and to see Russia and to study the situation.

The Chairman. Did they have their expenses paid?

Mr. Randolph. Their expenses are paid, I think; yes.

The Chairman. By whom?

Mr. Randolph. By the communist movement. I have heard that Mr. Patterson is going to engage in the diplomatic service for the Russian Government. So that it is viewed by a large number of negroes as an opportunity for some unusual progress.

The Chairman. Advancement?

Mr. Randolph. Advancement.

The Chairman. Are there any further questions. If not, thank you very much.

Investigation of Communist Propaganda, Hearings before a Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States. House of Representatives, seventy-first Congress, second session, 1930. Vol. 1, pp. 242-51.

#### 61. 400 FIGHT LYNCH LAW AT MEETING IN SOUTH

Winston-Salem Negro, White Workers Unite

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C., Feb. 6.--One lone cop observed with disfavor the mass meeting of over 400 Negro and white workers who filled a corner near the Reynolds Tobacco Factory, No. 4, here at noon today, and cheered Communist and Trade Union Unity League speakers who denounced the lynching at Ocilla, Ga., of Jimmy Levine, a Negro tenant farmer. The speakers urged, amidst applause, the organizing together of Negro and white workers, and the building of united defense committees to stop lynching.

This demonstration was the first of its kind here, and was prepared for by the distribution of 3,000 leaflets, Daily Workers and Young Workers, with the slogan: "Down with lynch law" displayed. The workers grabbed them eagerly, especially the Negro workers.

#### Negro Chairman

Speakers at the meeting were Sol Harper, Negro worker, chairman; Binkley, local T.U.U.L. secretary; M. H. Powers, District Organizer of the Communist Party; Joe Carr, district organizer of the Young Communist League, and Si Gerson, of the Trade Union Unity League.

Signs were displayed, stating: "Down With Lynch Law;" "Organize United Committees Against Lynching;" other signs called on workers to join the Communist Party, the Young Communist League and the fighting trade unions of the Trade Union Unity League.

The workers are eagerly awaiting more of these meetings, and recognize this as a real move for organization against the Reynolds Tobacco Co. The Negro workers are especially sympathetic to the policies of the Communist Party, and the T.U.U.L. and contrast them with the A.F. of L. program, which sold out the workers here in 1921.

Unemployed meetings are scheduled to be held here soon.

*Daily Worker*, February 8, 1930.

## 62. NEGRO MASSES UNEMPLOYED

Among the 6,000,000 jobless workers in the United States there are hundreds of thousands of Negro workers. On the job they are exploited to the utmost, and when unemployed their lot is the most miserable of all the workers. The Chicago World, a Negro paper, reports that there are more than 25,000 unemployed in Chicago. The Chicago World gives a description of the suffering of these Negro jobless:

"A great majority of the men are married, with families dependent on them for support. A great number of the idle workers have been without jobs since last summer. Their wives and children and others who may be dependent on them are barely existing in miserable living quarters; hungry and cold; racked by diseases peculiar to exposure and ravages of severe winter weather. They are threatened momentarily with eviction because of inability to pay exorbitant rents for dilapidated quarters, unfit for human habitation."

But the Chicago World, like all the petty bourgeois Negro papers, gives as the solution the election of such capitalist and betraying politicians as Oscar de Priest, who favors the Hoover-A.F. of L. anti-Negro, anti-worker campaigns and the "no strikes," and "no wage increases" agreements.

The Trade Union Unity League is organizing all the unemployed, both Negro and white, for a united fight for immediate relief and for unemployment insurance. The Negro jobless must organize together with the white workers for the mass demonstrations to culminate on Feb. 28.

No passive section or direct support of the very forces who help exploit the Negro workers, such as the Chicago World suggests, will relieve the miserable condition of the Negro employed and unemployed. By fighting side by side with their white fellow workers, under the banner of the T.U.U.L., will the Negro workers be able to disgorge unemployment relief from the bosses' state.

*The Liberator*, February 25, 1930.

## 63. PRAY, DON'T FIGHT, SAY SKY PILOTS

Charlotte, N.C.

Since we colored workers began to organize and join the Unemployed Council to help ourselves, the preachers and their agents became greatly alarmed. At the call of the Charlotte Observer, the paper of the capitalists in Charlotte, Negro preachers in most of the churches have turned their Sunday services into propaganda speeches against the workers and their fighting labor organizations.

It seems like these sky pilots are afraid that if we Negro workers open our eyes and begin to fight our real enemies, these Negro preachers will lose their "do nothing" jobs and will have to go to work.

Douglas Rogers, one of the deacons of the House of Prayer got up and attacked the T.U.U.L., before a crowd of Negro workers, telling them to "stay away" from the union, but to continue praying.

Douglas, why don't you tell the workers what is being done with the two big bowls of nickels and dimes and pennies that is being collected from the Negro workers every day at the House of Prayer?

If these nickels and dimes go for the feeding of the children, then why does the soup that the children are fed on look like old thick black mud, that I wouldn't feed a dog with?

Douglas, the union must be hurting you or you wouldn't kick.

A Negro Worker.

*Southern Worker*, Feb. 14, 1931.

#### 64. THE JOBLESS NEGRO

By Elizabeth Lawson

We begin with the story of Norman and Estelle Smith, young Negro couple of Harlem, New York. Their story tells, clearer than any statistics, the misery of unemployment the long-drawn-out process of starvation that is today imposed upon 17 million people in this country. It tells of the effect of starvation on little children. It shows the cruelty and indifference of the relief bureaus. It shows how the bosses, laying the burden of the crisis on the backs of the working-class, have laid a double load on the backs of the Negro workers. And it shows, finally, how the workers, Negro and white, are learning to throw aside their boss-inspired prejudices and are fighting--together--against misery and starvation.

##### The Story of Norman Smith

Years ago, Norman Smith, Negro painter and cabinetmaker, went from Anderson, Indiana, where he had been born, to Baltimore. Jobs were pretty scarce for Negro workers, even in those days. The union, too, refused to take him in. They didn't tell him he couldn't join--just kept him coming back, until he finally realized they didn't want him in the organization. One official, a little more outspoken than the others, said that he "didn't know about Niggers joining up.

Still, he got a little work. Then he met Estelle Palmer. They were married and went to New York. They thought things would be better in New York--more jobs that a Negro worker could get at. Smith took whatever he could get. He worked as fireman-porter for \$70 a month, and held on to that job till April, 1930. He remembers the date very exactly, because it was the last steady job he's had since.

When he got laid off it was the first spring of the present crisis. If jobs had been scarce before for Negro workers, they just weren't to be found now. For the whole summer of 1930, Norman Smith didn't work at all, except for two weeks as dishwasher at the Ward Coffee Pot. It brought him--expert craftsman that he was--just \$15 a week. He had to take it, for by that time, there were not only himself and Estelle, but also young Norman and Lloyd.

##### Five Dollars a Week for Four

In May, 1930, he had to ask for help. He went to the Charity Organization Society. After a time they gave him \$5 a week--for four people to live on, in New York City. In July, they cut him off altogether. About this time they were evicted from their home.

Next thing, he got a job in the Bronx, through the Charity Organization Society. The job was loading lawn mowers on trucks. It wasn't long before he strained his back. When he got out of the hospital, still hurt and shaky, the Charity Society said that that showed he didn't want to work anyhow. They cut off his relief.

The family moved to 53rd Street. The Charity Organization Society there gave them \$3 to \$5 a week for a little while, then cut him off and ordered him to the municipal lodging house.

And then at last something new happened! Norman Smith and his wife heard of the Unemployed Council! They went to the Council's headquarters and told them they were denied relief and had been evicted again. The Council got the



whole neighborhood aroused about it. Negro workers, white workers, men and women, all together, they came out and moved the family into the apartment.

It was only a few days afterwards that Estelle Smith gave birth to another child.

The Unemployed Council sent a delegation to the Charity Organization office and forced them to give relief. The charity people had said before that they couldn't, but they did it now! They gave out \$5 at once for food--with a crowd of Negro workers and white workers standing in front of the office with determination all over their faces--and they got a letter to the Emergency Work Bureau that got them work for three days a week for the whole winter.

In April, 1932, they moved back to Harlem. A week later Smith was laid off his charity job. The Charity Society at Lenox Avenue refused any aid--until a new delegation arrived from the Unemployed Council.

By October Mrs. Smith was in the hospital with her fourth child, having eaten almost nothing but cabbage and beans during her pregnancy. She was treated in the Harlem Hospital. On November 16 she died.

Six Negro and white workers stood about the coffin of Estelle Smith, only 27 years old, wife and mother of four small children. They stood there with fists clenched, and the workers vowed to avenge her death.

Workers spoke--the local leaders of working-class organizations.

"The City of New York murdered Mrs. Estelle Smith," said the leader of the Unemployed Council. "They murdered her by starvation and poverty. At a time when she needed care, she got only hunger and trouble. She was a victim of the mass starvation policy of the city government and of the government of the United States. She was not only a worker, but a Negro worker, and therefore she suffered starvation earlier and more deeply than even the white workers.

#### Starvation and Plenty

"While the warehouses were bursting with food, Mrs. Smith lived on cabbage and beans. While apartments and flats stood empty, she was thrown out on the street to freeze.

"This murder is only one of many. It will be repeated a thousand times unless we take measures to stop it. We must organize ourselves, black and white together. We must force the city and national governments to grant us relief and unemployment insurance."

A voice spoke from the crowd: "I move that we elect, here and now, at this funeral, a delegate to the National Hunger March to Washington on December 5. I move that we send Norman Smith, the husband of this murdered woman, to the National Capitol to demand immediate winter relief, unemployment insurance, and an end to the discrimination against the Negro jobless!"<sup>122</sup>

When, in December, 1932, the hunger marchers, elected delegates of the unemployed from coast to coast, swung down the streets of the national capital after being penned by military force in a valley on the outskirts of the city for more than 48 hours, two of the leaders were Negro workers. Negro delegates, who were more than a quarter of all the marchers, were all through the ranks. As the marchers--with a police escort that exceeded the delegates in numbers, went through the Negro districts of Washington, every house was emptied, every street was filled with cheering men, women and children.

The hunger marches of 1931 and 1932 threw fear into the hearts of the starvation-lords of America. And not the least of their fear was the unbreakable solidarity of Negro and white workers.

"No discrimination against Negro workers!" "Equal relief for the Negro jobless!" These and similar slogans were displayed on banners carried by the marchers, both Negro and white.

The national hunger marches smashed through Jim-Crow lines everywhere. Delegations of Negro and white forced even Southern charity stations to house the groups together. The marchers indignantly rejected offers of lodging in government-owned camps with discrimination against Negroes. When a city official suggested to a delegation that the Negroes leave for another lodging, a wave of indignation went through the group, and the official was thrown out. The delegates, Negro and white, ate, slept, fought, side by side. On every leading committee of the marchers were Negro workers. David Paindexter, Negro

worker of Chicago, led the first delegation to the capitol.

Behind the delegates were records of struggle in every important center of the country. No fighters in these struggles were more militant than the Negroes.

In Chicago and in Cleveland, Negro members of the Unemployed Council gave their life's blood in the struggle against evictions. In the struggles for bread in Detroit and in St. Louis, where the city officials answered the demand of the starving for bread, with a rain of bullets--Negroes were in the front ranks, and were among those murdered in the fight. Young Angelo Herndon, Negro leader of the workers who has been sentenced to serve 18 to 20 years on the Georgia chain-gang is the victim of this boss-terror, because he led the hungry workers of Atlanta to demand relief from the city council.

#### Why Negro Workers are Fighting

It was no accident that the Negro delegates were in the front ranks in the national hunger marches. It was no accident that such a large number of the marchers, who had withstood hunger and cold and threats of death from the armed forces at Washington to present the demands of the unemployed--that such a large number were Negroes.

There are seventeen million workers out of a job in the United States today. They are starving and homeless. All of them have reasons to fight against these conditions.

But the Negro workers have double cause to fight.

Why?

Because wherever the Negroes turn, they find that they are in even worse straits than the white workers.

Because more of their numbers, in proportion to the percentage of the population, are jobless than the whites. Because in every industry, in every factory, they are the first to be turned away and the last to be taken on.

Because the relief agencies Jim-Crow the Negro workers, degrade them, and in many cases slam the door in their faces altogether.

Because, whatever crust of charity is thrown out, the last and least of the crumbs fall to their lot.

Because, in addition to hunger and misery, the Negro unemployed are forced to suffer the extra yoke of special discriminations in the form of lynching, segregation, an extra measure of abuse, and intensified terrorism.

#### Negro Workers are Hardest Hit

In the large cities, the rate of unemployment among Negroes is admitted even by the city authorities--who are interested in concealing the true state of affairs--to be twice, three times and four or more times as high as the rate of white unemployment.

In Harlem, New York, sixty-four out of every hundred men are out of work. And four out of every five heads of families are jobless. In Baltimore, Negroes form seventeen per cent of the population, but are 31.5 per cent of the unemployed. In Charleston, South Carolina, half of the population are Negroes, but the Negroes form seventy per cent of the unemployed. In the steel and metal center of Youngstown, Ohio, Negroes form two-thirds of all unemployed. Over 90 per cent of the Negro workers in Newark are out of jobs.

Why the discrimination against the Negro workers?

The national oppression of the Negroes in America serves the white bosses and landlords--the real rulers of the country--in two ways. It lets them make bigger profits by having a section of the workers that they can pay even more miserably, work even longer, than other workers. Also, this discrimination is designed to keep Negro and white workers from getting together and fighting their common enemy, the white bosses, for bread and work and the fight to live.

The director of the Community Chest in Birmingham reports that while in 1928 and 1929, twenty per cent of those applying for relief were Negroes, by 1932 this proportion had increased to 65 per cent. This shows that Negroes were thrown out of industry at a much faster rate than white workers--that the crisis and the resulting unemployment have been felt most sharply by Negroes.

But not only are the Negroes the first to be laid off--they are also being replaced by white workers in the jobs that do exist. The bosses hope in

this way to divide the Negro and white workers through petty bribes to the whites.

In the past, certain jobs have been recognized as traditionally "jobs for Negroes." These were, of course, the worst jobs, carrying with them the most disagreeable work, the longest hours and the least pay.

Today, white workers are being used, in many instances, to lower still further the conditions of the Negroes and the workers in general. Many white workers have been used to replace Negroes as janitors, bootblacks, etc., at even lower wages than had been paid to the Negroes.

In Atlanta, 150 Negro bellboys were replaced by whites. White girls were used to replace colored male employees of over 40 years standing in the check room of the Pennsylvania railroad station. In Harrisburg, Pa., one of the largest hotels displaced Negro waiters with white waitresses. Department stores in Ohio have replaced Negro porters by whites. In Austin, Texas, whites are now employed instead of Negroes to deliver goods for jobbing houses. Examples could be multiplied indefinitely.

#### Discrimination Against Negroes in Public Works

The public works operated by the national, State, city and county governments systematically discriminate against Negroes. At the Hoover Dam, in Nevada, no Negro workers were taken on until persistent protests had forced the contractors to hire at least a handful out of a working force of thousands. Latest reports from Nevada are that the majority of these Negroes have been fired.

It was publicly announced by the Highway Commission of Mississippi that no Negroes would be employed in the work of public road building.

Negroes are not allowed to work on the river work in Omaha, a Federal job. They have been systematically discriminated against at the El Capitan Dam in San Diego. They were refused work in the building of the new wing at Harlem Hospital, New York, and were not employed to tear up and re-lay 143rd and 136th streets, in the very heart of Harlem.

But at the same time, with the least chance of being employed, with the worst pay on the job, Negro workers are forced to pay higher rents and higher prices for food, in the segregated, Jim-Crow areas into which they are herded. And on top of it all, they get the least relief of any of the jobless.

According to a survey made in October, 1932, 74 per cent of the unemployed in Harlem were not receiving any relief at all. In Washington, D.C., Negro jobless receive at all times at least one-third less than the meager relief doled out to unemployed whites. If work is given, Negroes get less. They also get less food. Negro and white are waited on in different rooms. The unemployed relief station for Negroes in San Antonio, Texas, has been closed down altogether. In many cities of the South--Jacksonville, for example--the grafting charity authorities force the Negro jobless to work for the Red Cross flour which the white unemployed get free.

The relief agencies say smugly: "Never mind--Negroes are used to a lower standard of living anyway." That is the excuse given to grind the Negroes down still further.

#### Terrorism Against Negro Jobless

The authorities in many places are trying to send back to the South some Negro families who have come north. The city officials of Newark thought out a scheme to deport jobless Negroes back South. They did this through the Red Cross.

This means sending Negroes back where they will not only starve, but are denied the most elementary democratic rights, where terror against the Negro people is greatest.

The police are most vicious against the Negro jobless. In the South, the vagrancy laws are used to put jobless Negroes on the chain-gang. In every city, in every rural village, the police ruthlessly frame jobless Negroes and throw them into jail. They even murder them outright. In the last year, hundreds of Negro workers were shot down in cold blood, by police and sheriffs, for picking up a bit of coal along the railroad tracks, for taking a loaf of bread. The nine Scottsboro boys, who were framed on a fake charge of "rape" in Alabama, were jobless boys looking for work on the Mississippi river boats.

Since the Fall of 1929, we heard that "prosperity is just around the corner." But the crisis is still deepening; unemployment increases every day.

How can we help ourselves?

The leaders of various groups have different solutions to propose, especially to the doubly-oppressed Negro workers. Let us examine some of these proposals and see what they are worth.

#### Back to the Farms

Some say the unemployed should go back to the farms. But what would this mean? The situation of the Negro farmer, share-cropper and tenant is today one of literal starvation. There is hardly a handful of Negro farm-owners left in any one State. The farms are being seized for debt. The landlords are refusing to "furnish" the croppers and their families. Thousands of farms are being abandoned by Negro farmers who can no longer scratch even the barest living from the soil.

The Negro share-croppers, in heroic struggles, are fighting against this starvation. Already, at Camp Hill and at Reeltown, Alabama, they have had bloody encounters with the landlords and sheriffs.

Shall the Negro jobless allow themselves to be shipped back to this slow starvation on the farms? No! It is a scheme to put the jobless where they can starve out of sight. We must fight to force the bosses and their government to pay unemployment relief and social insurance.

As usual the Negro misleaders fall in line with the white bosses and landlords and approve this scheme. They also support the tactics of the bosses of splitting and dividing the toiling masses. For example, the editors of the *Chicago Defender* say that the bosses should "Hire American!" What does this mean? It means that the *Defender* is falling in line with the policy of the big white bosses to divide the workers still further. This slogan seeks to drive a wedge between foreign-born and Negro workers. It is aimed to prevent our joining together, Negro and white, native and foreign-born, to fight for bread and work. By this slogan, the bosses seek to set the workers to fighting one another. And if we examine this slogan--"Hire American!"--we see that it drives a wedge even into the ranks of the Negro jobless, because there are not only native but many foreign-born Negroes in the United States. In the North the bosses and their agents raise the fake slogan of "Hire American." In the South they raise the slogan "Fire the Niggers."

#### The Boycott Movement

There are groups that say that Negroes should boycott,--that is, refuse to buy from--all stores in the Negro neighborhoods that will not hire Negro workers. Not only the Negro, but also the white workers, should make a fight on those stores that refuse to hire Negro workers.

But there are definite limits to the results to be obtained by a boycott. First of all, this struggle is confined to stores in the Jim-Crow districts, and this movement applies only to such stores. But most of the jobs are not in stores at all, but in factories and mines. To be effective, the fight must be carried on jointly by Negro and white workers and must extend far beyond the confines of the Jim-Crow district.

#### The Unemployed Councils

In every city the Unemployed Councils have rallied the workers to present demands before local officials. The Unemployed Councils and their block committees fight to prevent the evictions of the jobless. They form committees to take individual workers and their families to the relief stations and get immediate aid.

We saw, in the case of Norman Smith, that only when the Unemployed Councils came on the scene, was anything actually done. The Unemployed Councils of the various cities, uniting Negro and white toilers together, have been able to gain relief for many jobless families; have been able to prevent evictions of the unemployed; have been able to prevent the cutting down of relief.

After Angelo Herndon, young Negro organizer of the Unemployed Council, had

led Negro and white workers in a demonstration before the City Council, the authorities were forced to vote an additional \$6,000 for relief for the unemployed.

By militant and united action, the unemployed of Chicago forced the city to revoke a cut in the amount of relief. In St. Louis, after a furious struggle, the jobless workers, Negro and white, forced the city relief bureaus to put 13,000 names back on their rolls.

What are the demands of the Unemployed Councils? As various questions come up in different neighborhoods, the Unemployed Councils fight for these immediate needs. But there are certain general demands that the Unemployed Councils are fighting for all over the country. These are:

1. Immediate relief for the unemployed, \$50 for each unemployed worker, \$10 for each dependent. This to be given by the Federal government in addition to the local relief.
2. Unemployment Insurance, at the expense of the bosses and government.
3. No discrimination against Negroes on the job or at relief stations.

From a system of Federal unemployment insurance, the Negroes would have the most to gain. Fired first, hired last, denied even the few crumbs of relief granted to the white workers, abused and terrorized--the Negro workers stand in the greatest need of such a system of unemployment insurance. Their jobs are the least secure; their chance of getting aid is the least of all the workers.

Well-fed misleaders among the Negro people (the Du Boises, the Pickenses, the Walter Whites) tell the Negroes not to fight. They say there is no use fighting. They say the Negroes will only get into "trouble." They talk as if starvation and suffering and terrorism were not "trouble." Here, as in every struggle, these misleaders try to hold back the developing fight of Negro and white workers.

Here is the fact: whatever has been gained, has been gained by militant, united mass struggle, by united action of Negro and white workers, employed and unemployed, native and foreign-born.

#### Race Hatred Being Smashed in Struggle

Under the leadership of the Unemployed Councils, the white workers are learning that they can gain nothing unless they fight also with and for the Negro workers. The Negro workers, on their side, are learning that their only allies are the white workers, who, like themselves, are jobless and freezing and starving. In the process of struggle, the color-line, so carefully set up by the white bosses, is being smashed.

The workers can force the bosses to give larger sums for relief. The workers can break down the system of discrimination.

*We will not starve! We will not tolerate Jim-Crowism! The only way out is the way of unity for white and Negro workers, under the leadership of the Unemployed Councils, in a militant fight for bread and work!*

Pamphlet issued by the National Committee of Unemployment Councils, New York, 1933. Copy in Library of Marximus-Leninismus, Berlin, DRG.

#### 65. AN APPEAL TO NEGRO WORKERS AND TOILERS

The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers earnestly appeals to the Negro workers and employees of Africa, the West Indies, Latin America, the United States and other countries arouse themselves, to give voice to their complaints and grievances and to take the necessary actions to protect themselves at this, one of the most serious, one of the most decisive moments in the history of the black peoples.

NEGRO WORKERS AND TOILERS! We constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of Africa and of the West Indies. We are one-tenth of the population of the United States. Yet, while we are for the most a people

of the soil, everywhere we are practically landless. Wherever coloured races and peoples are oppressed and exploited, we suffer most. We are scattered in many lands, a subject people under alien rule. And almost everywhere we are the victims of the same evils of discrimination, disfranchisement and persecution. We are faced with a common situation and can only gain our freedom in common action where we live.

The living conditions of the Negro toilers are growing worse and are becoming ever more intolerable. Wage cuts, lengthening of hours of labor, unemployment, stringent repressive measures, increasing limitations of rights and freedom, these are among the growing burdens of the Negro masses.

We endured inhuman sufferings in the last world war organized by the moneyed class who talked of freedom, of democracy, but who redivided our lands among themselves, intensifying our slavery. There was no relief for us. No emancipation, no freedom, no land, no equality! Today, there is again open talk and preparation for redividing the African colonies, for redistributing the mandated territories between the "haves" and the "have-nots" of the imperialist powers. But not one word is said about the interests of the colonial peoples, about their inherent right to national independence.

Abyssinia is being mercilessly attacked with bombs and shells and gas. Her men, women and children are being slaughtered. Italian fascism led by the most chauvinist, the most reactionary of its ruling cliques has started a redivision of Africa. The League of Nations seeks to evade the question of stopping the war. The British and French imperialists seek to settle the war at the expense of Abyssinia which will suit the interests of the various imperialist powers, but not the interests of the Abyssinian people.

We must demand the consistent application of the covenant of the League in defense of the integrity and territorial independence of Abyssinia. It is our task to draw all sections of the Negro people in a mighty movement of action to prevent the enslavement of the Abyssinian people.

More and more clearly the war in Abyssinia is showing that we have friends and allies among the people of every land, race and nationality. The workers and intellectuals, the men and women who are advocating peace and are carrying on a great struggle against war. Those who are working to defend the national independence of Abyssinia are thus helping to strengthen everywhere the liberation struggles of the Negro masses. We must make common cause with, and join the working class and progressive forces of every country who are fighting for peace, rights and freedom.

We must throw ourselves fearlessly into this struggle. We can and must be a decisive factor in securing and maintaining the national independence of Abyssinia and thus helping to gain our own freedom. *But this demands organization and struggle.*

We must organize so that through our united strength and activities we can be of aid to all who fight against oppression, war and fascism. Equally important is that we should organize our forces so that through organized struggle we can better the conditions of our daily lives and those of our families. *These are our greatest tasks!*

Let us organize and build the trade union movement, let us organize trade unions or other forms of organization, according to the circumstances, that will work and struggle to promote the interests of the Negro masses. Trade Unions that will fight for the shorter working day, for more pay, for better working conditions, for sick and accident insurance, for equality for the workers of every race. Trade union organizations that will struggle against the Master and Servants laws, the Color Bar in industry, forced labor, high taxation, the abominable practice of fines and whippings and other repressive measures and for the right of the Negro workers to organize.

On our determination to organize and direct our forces into trade unions, and to join, strengthen and unite the existing unions into strong militant organizations capable of leading and guiding the struggles of the workers, much depends.

Negro Workers and toilers! *The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* helps and advises the workers in their activities and in their efforts to organize their ranks. Our Committee has always been in the forefront defending the interests of the Negro toilers and guiding them in their struggles. It initiated the international campaign against the bloody war of Italian fascism against Abyssinia. It has given vigorous aid in the campaign for freedom of the Scottsboro boys and Angelo Herndon. It has fought against

the exploitation and oppression of the African peoples everywhere.

During the five years of its activities, it has always responded to the call of its supporters and of the workers to aid them in their attempt to improve their condition and to fight against the forces of reaction. Through its organ, the Negro Worker, and other literature, it has carried on a relentless fight against every form of exploitation and tyrannic rule imposed upon the Negro people.

The increasing attacks on our living standards calls for serious attention to the pressing necessity of uniting our ranks to organize and build up the trade union movement or to join the already existing unions. At the same time, it is of extreme importance that the trade union and other organized forces in the colonies and elsewhere should be coordinated and combined in order to stimulate their growth, strengthen their fighting capacity, and that they may be of mutual assistance to each other.

To accomplish this, and to be able to aid and serve more effectively the Negro workers in their future activities and struggles, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers appeals to *all trade unions, agricultural workers' unions, peasant committees, groups, committees and associations of workers, tenants leagues, mutual aid organization, educational clubs, etc., of Negro workers* in Africa, the West Indies, the U.S.A. and elsewhere, who are not already affiliated to the Committee, to join its ranks through *affiliation*. In this way it will be possible to create an international coordinating center that will be able to give real and effective support to its adherents in their work as well as greatly help to carry out its task of aiding in the development of trade unions among the Negro workers everywhere and in helping to break down the barriers which separate the Negro toilers from the workers of other races. In this way we will be able to close our ranks in a common front against the enemy.

Affiliation to the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers is *voluntary and fraternal*, the only condition is that the organization agrees to struggle against exploitation, for improving the living standards of the Negro masses, for equal rights and conditions on the job for Negro workers in every country and for the liberation of the Negro people.

*Negro workers organized and unorganized!* Heed our appeal! Discuss it at your meetings or other gatherings and spread it among the workers at the work places! Decide to affiliate to the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers.

Let us organize and fight for a better life, for equal rights, for freedom.

Fraternally yours,

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION COMMITTEE OF NEGRO WORKERS.

*The Negro Worker*, 6 (April, 1936): 18-20.

66. GEORGIA IMPRISONS NEGRO RED UNDER A 'CARPETBAGGER' LAW

By The Associated Press

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*New York Times*, January 19, 1933.

67. APPEAL FOR NEGRO IN RED CONVICTION

Herndon, Sentenced for Inciting Insurrection,  
Takes Case to Georgia High Court

Unfair Trial Claimed

Negroes Barred From Jury, Defense Says--Old Law Invoked  
by the State

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*New York Times*, August 27, 1933.

68. WORKERS OF ATLANTA!  
EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED--NEGRO AND WHITE--ATTENTION!

MEN AND WOMEN OF ATLANTA:

Thousands of us, together with our families, are at this time facing starvation and misery and are about to be thrown out of our houses because the miserable charity hand-out that some of us were getting has been stopped! Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been collected from workers in this city for relief for the unemployed, and most of it has been squandered in high salaries for the heads of these relief agencies.

Mr. T. K. Glenn, president of the Community Chest, is reported to be getting a salary of \$10,000 a year. Mr. Frank Nealy, executive director of the Community Chest, told the County Commission Saturday that he gets \$6,500 a year, while at the same time no worker, no matter how big his family, gets more than two dollars and half to live on. If we count the salaries paid the secretaries and the investigators working in the thirty-eight relief stations in this city, it should not surprise us that the money for relief was used up and there is no more left to keep us from starvation. If we allow ourselves to starve while these fakers grow fat off our misery, it will be our own fault.

The bosses want us to starve peacefully and by this method save the money they have accumulated off our sweat and blood. We must force them to continue our relief and give more help. We must not allow them to stall us any longer with fake promises. The city and county authorities from the money they have already collected from us in taxes, and by taking the incomes of the bankers and other rich capitalists, can take care of every unemployed family in Atlanta. We must make them do it.

At a meeting of the County Commissioners last Saturday, it was proposed by Walter S. McNeal, Jr., to have the police round up all unemployed workers and their families and ship them back to the farms and make them work for just board and no wages, while just a few months ago these hypocrites were talking about forced labor in Soviet Russia, a country where there is no starvation and where the workers rule! Are we going to let them force us into slavery?

At this meeting Mr. Hendrix said that there were no starving families in Atlanta, that if there is he has not seen any. Let's all of us, white and Negroes, together, with our women folk and children, go to his office in the county court house on Pryor and Hunter Streets Thursday morning at 10 o'clock

and show this faker that there is plenty of suffering in the city of Atlanta and demand that he give us immediate relief! Organize and fight for unemployment insurance at the expense of the government and the bosses! Demand immediate payment of the bonus to the ex-servicemen. Don't forget Thursday morning at the county court house.

Issued by the  
Unemployed Committee of Atlanta,  
P. O. Box 339

As reproduced in Angelo Herndon, *Let Me Live* (New York, 1969), pp. 335-36.

#### 69. ANGELO HERNDON'S SPEECH TO THE JURY

"Gentlemen of the Jury: I would like to explain in detail the nature of my case and the reason why I was locked up. I recall back about the middle of June 1932, when the Relief Agencies of the City of Atlanta, the County Commission and the city government as a whole, were cutting both Negro and white workers off relief. We all know that there were citizens who suffered from unemployment. There were hundreds and thousands of Negroes and whites who were each day looking for work, but in those days there was no work to be found.

"The Unemployment Council, which has connection with the Unemployed Committees of the United States, after 23,000 families had been dropped from the relief rolls, started to organize the Negro and white workers of Atlanta on the same basis, because we know that their interests are the same. The Unemployment Council understood that in order to get relief, both races would have to organize together and forget about the question whether those born with a white skin are 'superior' and those born with a black skin are 'inferior.' They both were starving and the capitalist class would continue to use this weapon to keep them further divided. The policy of the Unemployment Council is to organize Negroes and whites together on the basis of fighting for unemployment relief and unemployment insurance at the expense of the state. The Unemployment Council of Atlanta issued those leaflets after the relief had been cut off, which meant starvation for thousands of people here in Atlanta. The leaflets called upon the Negro and white workers to attend a meeting at the court house building on a Thursday morning. I forget the exact date. This action was initiated as the result of statements handed out to the local press by Country Commissioners who said that there was nobody in the City of Atlanta starving, and if there were, those in need should come to the offices of the Commissioners and the matter would be looked into. That statement was made by Commissioner Hendrix.

"The Unemployment Council pointed out in its circulars that there were thousands of unemployed workers in the City of Atlanta who faced hunger and starvation. Therefore, they were called upon to demonstrate in this court house building, about the middle part of June. When the Committee came down to the court house, it so happened that Commissioner Hendrix was not present that morning. There were unemployed white women with their babies almost naked and without shoes to go on their feet, and there were also Negro women with their little babies actually starving for the need of proper nourishment, which had been denied them by the county of Fulton and State of Georgia and City of Atlanta as well.

"Well, the Negro and white workers came down to the Commissioners' office to show that there was starvation in the City of Atlanta and that they were in actual need of food and proper nourishment for their kids, which they never did receive. I think Commissioner Stewart was in the office at that time. The white workers were taken into his room and the Negroes had the door shut in their faces. This was done with the hope of creating racial animosity in order that they would be able to block the fight that the Negro and white workers were carrying on--a determined fight to get relief. The white workers were told: 'Well, the county hasn't any money, and of course, you realize the depression and all that but we haven't got the money.' We knew that the county did have money, but were using it for their own interest, and not for the interest of the Negro workers or white workers, either way.

They talked to the white workers some considerable time, but when the white workers came out, they had just about as much results as the Negroes did--only a lot of hot air blown over them by the Commissioners, which didn't put any shoes on their little babies' feet and no milk in their stomachs to give them proper nourishment. No one disputed the fact they did keep the Negroes on the outside, but the white workers were in the same condition that their Negro brothers were in. In spite of the fact that the County Commissioners had published statements to the effect that there was no money in the county treasury to provide unemployment relief for the Negro and white workers, still the next day after the demonstration the County Commissioners voted \$6,000 for relief, mainly because it was shown that for the first time in the history of Atlanta and the State of Georgia, Negro and white workers did join together and did go to the Commissioners and demand unemployment insurance. Have not they worked in the City of Atlanta, in different industries, different shops and other industrial concerns located in Atlanta for all their years, doing this work, building up the city where it is at the present time? And now, when they were in actual need of food to hold their bodies together, and when they came before the state and county officials to demand something to hold their bodies together, they were denied it. The policy of the Unemployment Council is to organize these workers and demand those things that are denied them. They have worked as slaves, and are entitled to a decent living standard. And, of course, the workers will get it if you ever organize them.

"After the successful demonstration, the solicitor's office had two detectives stationed at the post office to arrest anyone who came to take mail out of box 339. On Monday, July 11, 1932, I went to the post office to get mail from this box and was arrested by detectives, Mr. Watson and Mr. Chester. I had organized unemployed workers, Negro and white, of Atlanta, and forced the County Commissioners to kick in \$6,000 for unemployment relief. For this I was locked up in the station house and held eleven days without even any kind of charges booked against me. I was told at the station house that I was being held on 'suspicion.' Of course, they knew what the charges were going to be, but in order to hold me in jail and give me the dirtiest kind of inhuman treatment that one could describe, they held me there eleven days without any charge whatsoever until my attorney filed a writ of habeas corpus demand that they place charges against me or turn me loose. It was about the 22nd of July, and I still hadn't been indicted; there had been three sessions of the grand jury, and my case had been up before them each time, but still there was no indictment. This was a deliberate plot to hold me in jail. At the habeas corpus hearing, the judge ordered that if I wasn't indicted the next day by 2:30, I should be released. Solicitor Hudson assured the judge that there would be an indictment, which, of course, there was. Ever since then I have been cooped up in Fulton County Tower, where I have spent close to six months--I think the exact time was five months and three weeks. But I want to describe some of the horrible experiences that I had in Fulton Tower. I was placed in a little cell there with a dead body and forced to live there with the dead body because I couldn't get out of the place. The man's name was William Wilson, who fought in the Spanish-American war for the American principles, as we usually call it. He was there on a charge of alimony. His death came as a result of the rotten food given to all prisoners, and for the want of medical attention. The county physician simply refused to give this man any kind of attention whatsoever. After three days of illness, he died, and I was forced to live there with him until the undertaker came and got him. These are just some of the things that I experienced in jail. I was also sick myself. I could not eat the food they gave me as well as hundreds of prisoners. For instance, they give you peas and beans for one dinner, and at times you probably get the same thing three times a week. You will find rocks in it, and when you crack down on it with your teeth, you don't know what it is, and spit it out and there it is. They have turnip greens, and just as they are pulled up out of the ground and put in the pot, with sand, rocks and everything else. But that's what you have to eat, otherwise you don't live. For breakfast they feed grits that look as if they were baked instead of boiled, a little streak of grease running through them, about two strips of greasy fatback. That is the main prison fare, and you eat it or else die from starvation. I was forced to go through all of this for five months without a trial. My lawyers demanded a trial time after time, but somehow the state would always find a reason to postpone it.

"They knew that the workers of Atlanta were starving, and by arresting Angelo Herndon on a charge of attempting to incite insurrection the unity of Negro and white workers that was displayed in the demonstration that forced the County Commissioners to kick in with \$6,000, would be crushed forever. They locked Angelo Herndon up on such charges. But I can say this quite clearly, if the State of Georgia and the City of Atlanta think that by locking up Angelo Herndon, the question of unemployment will be solved, I say you are deady wrong. If you really want to do anything about the case, you must go out and indict the social system. I am sure that if you would do this, Angelo Herndon would not be on trial here today, but those who are really guilty of insurrection would be here in my stead. But this you will not do, for your role is to defend the system under which the toiling masses are robbed and oppressed. There are thousands of Negro and white workers who, because of unemployment and hunger, are organizing. If the state wants to break up this organization, it cannot do it by arresting people and placing them on trial for insurrection, insurrection laws will not fill empty stomachs. Give the people bread. The officials knew then that the workers were in need of relief, and they know now that the workers are going to organize and get relief.

"After being confined in jail for the long period of time that I have already mentioned, I was sick for several weeks. I asked for aid from the county physician and was refused that; the physician came and looked through the bars to me and said: 'What's the matter with you?' I told him, 'I'm sick, can't swallow water, my chest up here is tight and my stomach absolutely out of order, seems as if I am suffering with ulcers or something.' He would answer: 'Oh, there's nothing the matter with you, you're all right.' I explained: 'I know my condition. I know how I'm feeling.' He said: 'You will be all right.' Through friends I was able to get some medicine; otherwise I would have died.

"On Christmas Eve I was released. My bail was once \$3,000 but they raised it to \$5,000 and from that up to \$25,000, just in order to hold me in jail, but you can hold this Angelo Herndon and hundreds of others, but it will never stop these demonstrations on the part of Negro and white workers, who demand a decent place to live in and proper food for their kids to eat.

"I want to say also that the policy of the Unemployment Council is to carry on a constant fight for the rights of the Negro people. We realize that unless Negro and white workers are united together, they cannot get relief. The capitalist class teaches race hatred to Negro and white workers and keep it going all the time, tit for tat, the white worker running after the Negro worker and the Negro worker running after the white worker, and the capitalist becomes the exploiter and the robber of them both. We of the Unemployment Council are out to expose such things. If there were not any Negroes in the United States, somebody would have to be used as the scapegoat. There would still be a racial question, probably the Jews, or the Greeks, or somebody. It is in the interest of the capitalist to play one race against the other, so greater profits can be realized from the working people of all races. It so happens that the Negro's skin is black, therefore making it much easier for him to be singled out and used as the scapegoat.

"I don't have to go so far into my case, no doubt some of you jurymen sitting over there in that box right now are unemployed and realize what it means to be without a job, when you tramp the streets day in and day out looking for work and can't find it. You know it is a very serious problem and the future looks so dim that you sometimes don't know what to do, you go nuts and want to commit suicide or something. But the Unemployment Council points out to the Negro and white workers that the solution is not in committing suicide, that the solution can only be found in the unity and organization of black and white workers. In organization the workers have strength. Now, why do I say this? I say it because it is to the interest of the capitalist class that the workers be kept down all of the time so they can make as much profit as they possibly can. So, on the other hand, it is to the interest of Negro and white workers to get as much for their work as they can--that is, if they happen to have any work. Unfortunately, at the present time there are millions of workers in the United States without work, and the capitalist class, the state government, city government and all other governments, have taken no steps to provide relief for those unemployed. And it seems that this question is left up to the Negro and white workers to solve,

and they will solve it by organizing and demanding the right to live, a right that they are entitled to. They have built up this country, and are therefore entitled to some of the things that they have produced. Not only are they entitled to such things, but it is their right to demand them. When the State of Georgia and the City of Atlanta raised the question of inciting to insurrection and attempting to incite to insurrection, or attempting to overthrow the government, all I can say is, that no matter what you do with Angelo Herndon, no matter what you do with the Angelo Herndons in the future, this question of unemployment, the question of unity between Negro and white workers cannot be solved with hands that are stained with blood of an innocent individual. You may send me to my death, as far as I know. I expect you to do that anyway, so that's beside the point. But no one can deny these facts. The present system under which we are living today is on the verge of collapse; it has developed to its highest point and now it is beginning to shake. For instance, you can take a balloon and blow so much air in it, and when you blow too much it bursts; so with the system we are living under --of course, I don't know if that is insurrection or not!

As reproduced in Angelo Herndon, *Let Me Live* (New York: 1969), pp. 342-48.

70. ANGELO HERNDON v. STATE OF GEORGIA  
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

No. 664. Decided May 20, 1935.

On appeal from the Supreme Court of Georgia.

WHITNEY NORTH SEYMOUR (Walter Gellhorn, Herbert T. Wechsler and Carol King with him on the brief) for appellant; J. Walter LeCraw, Assistant Solicitor General of Georgia (M. J. Yeomans, Attorney General, John A. Boykin, Solicitor General, B. D. Murphy, Assistant Attorney General and John H. Hudson, Assistant Solicitor General, with him on the brief) for appellee.

SUPREME COURT OF UNITED STATES --Appeal from State Supreme Court affirming judgment of conviction in criminal case--Absence of Federal question--

An appeal from a decision of the Supreme Court of Georgia affirming a lower state court's judgment of conviction of attempting to incite insurrection, in violation of a Georgia statute, is not within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of the United States, although the statute is assailed as in violation of the Federal Constitution, since the Federal question was not seasonably raised or passed on, in the court below.

The Federal question was raised in the lower state court in a preliminary attack upon the indictment, but the state supreme court declined to review the ruling of the trial court on the ground that the right to a review thereof was not preserved by exceptions, or assigned as error in due time in the bill of exceptions, as required by the established rules of the state. Such determination by state supreme court is conclusive on the Supreme Court of the United States. The presentation of the Federal question to the state supreme court on motion for rehearing is insufficient for its consideration by the Supreme Court of the United States. The rule that a Federal question may be raised in the Supreme Court of the United States for the first time where the state supreme court's ruling could not have been anticipated is not applicable.

Mr. Justice Sutherland delivered the opinion of the Court:

Appellant was sentenced to a term of imprisonment upon conviction by a jury in a Georgia court of first instance of an attempt to incite insurrection by endeavoring to induce others to join in combined resistance to the authority of the State to be accomplished by acts of violence, in violation of Sec. 56 of the Penal Code of Georgia (Note No. 1.). The supreme court of the state affirmed the judgment. 178 Ga. 832; rehearing denied, 179 Ga. 597. On this appeal, the statute is assailed as contravening the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in certain designated particulars. We find it unnecessary to review the points made, since this court is without jurisdiction for the reason that no Federal question was seasonably raised in the court below or

passed upon by that court.

It is true that there was a preliminary attack upon the indictment in the trial court on the ground, among others, that the statute was in violation "of the Constitution of the United States," and that this contention was overruled. But, in addition to the insufficiency of the specification (Note No. 2), the adverse action of the trial court was not preserved by exceptions *pendente lite* or assigned as error in due time in the bill of exceptions, as the settled rules of the state practice required.

In that situation, the state supreme court declined to review any of the rulings of the trial court in respect of that and other preliminary issues; and this determination of the state court is conclusive here. *John v. Paullin*, 231 U.S. 583, 585; *Atlantic Coast Line R.R. Co. v. Mims*, 242 U.S. 532, 535; *Nevada-California-Oregon Ry. v. Burrus*, 244 U.S. 103, 105; *Brooks v. Missouri*, 124 U.S. 394, 400; *Central Union Co. v. Edwardsville*, 269 U.S. 190-194-195; *Erie R.R. Co. v. Purdy*, 185 U.S. 148, 154; *Mutual Life Ins. Co. v. McGrew*, 188 U.S. 291, 308.

The Federal question was never properly presented to the state supreme court unless upon motion for rehearing; and that court then refused to consider it. The long-established general rule is that the attempt to raise a federal question after judgment, upon a petition for rehearing, comes too late, unless the court actually entertains the question and decides it. *Texas &c. Ry Co. v. Southern Pacific Co.*, 137 U.S. 48, 54; *Loeber v. Schroeder*, 149 U.S. 580, 585; *Godchaux Co. v. Estopinal*, 251 U.S. 179, 181; *Rooker v. Fidelity Trust Co.*, 261 U.S. 114, 117; *Tidal Oil Co. v. Flanagan*, 263 U.S. 444, 454-455, and cases cited.

Petitioner, however, contends that the present case falls within an exception to the rule--namely, that the question respecting the validity of the statute as applied by the lower court first arose from its unanticipated act in giving to the statute a new construction which threatened rights under the Constitution.

There is no doubt that the Federal claim was timely if the ruling of the state court could not have been anticipated and a petition for rehearing presented the first opportunity for raising it. *Saunders v. Shaw*, 244 U.S. 317, 320; *Ohio v. Akron Park District*, 281 U.S. 74, 79; *Missouri v. Gehner*, 281 U.S. 313, 320; *Brinkerhoff-Faris Co. v. Hill*, 281 U.S. 673, 677-678; *American Surety Co. v. Baldwin*, 287 U.S. 156, 164; *Gt. Northern Ry. Co. v. Sunburst Co.*, 287 U.S. 358, 367. The whole point, therefore, is whether the ruling here assailed should have been anticipated.

The trial court instructed the jury that the evidence would not be sufficient to convict the defendant if it did not indicate that his advocacy would be acted upon immediately; and that--"In order to convince the defendant . . . it must appear clearly by the evidence that immediate serious violence against the State of Georgia was to be expected or was advocated." Petitioner urges that the question presented to the state supreme court was whether the evidence made out a violation of the statute as thus construed by the trial court, while the supreme court construed the statute (178 Ga., p. 855) as not requiring that an insurrection should follow instantly or at any given time, but that "it would be sufficient that he (the defendant) intended it to happen at any time, as a result of his influence, by those whom he sought to incite," and upon that construction determined the sufficiency of the evidence against the defendant. If that were all, the petitioner's contention that the federal question was raised at the earliest opportunity well might be sustained; but it is not all.

The verdict of the jury was returned on January 18, 1933, and judgment immediately followed. On July 5, 1933, the trial court overruled a motion for a new trial. The original opinion was handed down and the judgment of the state supreme court entered May 24, 1934, the case having been in that court since the preceding July.

On March 18, 1933, several months prior to the action of the trial court on the motion for new trial, the state supreme court had decided *Carr v. State*, 176 Ga. 747. In that case section 56 of the Penal Code, under which it arose, was challenged as contravening the Fourteenth Amendment. The court in substance construed the statute as it did the present case. In the course of the opinion it said (p. 750):

"It (the state) cannot reasonably be required to defer the adoption of measures for its own peace and safety until the revolutionary utterances lead to actual disturbances of the public peace or imminent and immediate danger of its own destruction; but it may, in the exercise of its judgment, suppress the threatened danger in its incipency. 'Manifestly, the legislature has authority to forbid the advocacy of a doctrine designed and intended to overthrow the government without waiting until there is a present and imminent danger of the success of the plan advocated. If the State were compelled to wait until the apprehended danger became certain, then its rights to protect itself would come into being simultaneously with the overthrow of the government, when there would be neither prosecuting officers nor courts for the enforcement of the law.'"

The language contained in the subquotation is taken from *People v. Lloyd*, 304, 111. 23, 35 and is quoted with approval by this court in *Gitlow v. New York*, 268 U.S. 652, 669.

In the present case, following the language quoted at an earlier point in this opinion to the effect that it was sufficient if the defendant intended an insurrection to follow *at any time*, etc., the court below, in its original opinion, (178 Ga. 855), added--"It was the intention of this law to arrest at its incipency any effort to overthrow the State government, where it takes the form of an actual attempt to incite others to insurrection."

The phrase "at any time" is not found in the foregoing excerpt from the Carr case, but it is there in effect, when the phrase is given the meaning disclosed by the context, as that meaning is pointed out by the court below in its opinion denying the motion for a rehearing (179 Ga. 600), when it said that the phrase was necessarily intended to mean within a reasonable time--"that is, within such time as one's persuasion or other adopted means might reasonably be expected to be directly operative in causing an insurrection."

Appellant, of course, cannot plead ignorance of the ruling in the Carr case, and was, therefore, bound to anticipate the probability of a similar ruling in his own case, and preserve his right to a review here by appropriate action upon the original hearing in the court below. It follows that his contention that he raised the federal question at the first opportunity is without substance, and the appeal must be dismissed for want of jurisdiction.

It is so ordered.

Mr. Justice Cardozo:

The appellant has been convicted of an attempt to incite insurrection in violation of Section 56 of the Penal Code of Georgia. He has been convicted after a charge by the trial court that to incur a verdict of guilt he must have advocated violence with the intent that his advocacy should be acted on immediately and with reasonable grounds for the expectation that the intent should be fulfilled.

The appellant did not contend then, nor does he contend now, that a statute so restricted would involve an unconstitutional impairment of freedom of speech.

However, upon appeal from the judgment of conviction the Supreme Court of Georgia repudiated the construction adopted at the trial and substituted another. Promptly thereafter the appellant moved for a rehearing upon the ground that the substituted meaning made the statute unconstitutional, and in connection with that motion invoked the protection of the Fourteenth Amendment.

A rehearing was denied with an opinion which again construed the statute and again rejected the construction accepted in the court below. Now in this court the appellant renews his plaint that the substituted meaning makes the statute void.

By the judgment just announced the court declines to hear him. It finds that he was tardy in asserting his privileges and immunities under the Constitution of the United States, and disclaiming jurisdiction dismisses his appeal.

I hold the view that the protection of the Constitution was seasonably invoked and that the court should proceed to an adjudication of the merits. Where the merits lie I do not now consider, for in the view of the majority the merits are irrelevant. My protest is confined to the disclaimer of jurisdiction.

The settled doctrine is that when a constitutional privilege or immunity has been denied for the first time by a ruling made upon appeal, a litigant thus surprised may challenge the unexpected ruling by a motion for rehearing, and the challenge will be timely. *Missouri v. Gehner*, 281 U.S. 313, 320; *Brinkerhoff-Faris Trust & Savings Co. v. Hill*, 281 U.S. 673-678; *American Surety Co. v. Baldwin*, 287 U.S. 156, 164; *Great Northern R. Co. v. Sunburst Oil & Refining Co.*, 287 U.S. 358, 367; *Saunders v. Shaw*, 244 U.S. 317, 320. Within that settled doctrine the cause is rightly here.

Though the merits are now irrelevant, the controversy must be so far explained as to show how a federal question has come into the record. The appellant insists that words do not amount to an incitement to revolution, or to an attempt at such incitement, unless they are of such a nature and are used in such circumstances as to create "a clear and present danger" (*Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47, 52) of bringing the prohibited result to pass.

He insists that without this limitation a statute so lacking in precision as the one applied against him here is an unconstitutional restraint upon historic liberties of speech. For present purposes it is unimportant whether his argument be sound or shallow. At least it has color of support in words uttered from this bench, and uttered with intense conviction, *Schenck v. United States*, supra; cf. *Whitney v. California*, 274 U.S. 357, 374, 375; *Fiske v. Kansas*, 274 U.S. 380; *Gitlow v. New York*, 268 U.S. 652, 672, 273; *Schaefer v. United States*, 251 U.S. 466, 482.

The court might be unwilling, if it were to pass to a decision of the merits, to fit the words so uttered within the framework of this case. What the appellant is now asking of us is an opportunity to be heard. That privilege is his unless he has thrown it away by silence and acquiescence when there was need of speech and protest.

We are told by the state that the securities of the Constitution should have been invoked upon the trial. The presiding judge should have been warned that a refusal to accept the test of clear and present danger would be a rejection of the restraints of the Fourteenth Amendment.

But the trial judge had not refused to accept the test proposed; he had accepted it and even gone a step beyond. In substance, he had charged that even a present "danger" would not suffice, if there was not also an expectation, and one grounded in reason, that the insurrection would begin at once.

It is novel doctrine that a defendant who has had the benefit of all he asks, and indeed of a good deal more, must place a statement on the record that if some other court at some other time shall read the statute differently, there will be a denial of liberties that at the moment of the protest are unchallenged and intact. Defendants charged with crime are as slow as are men generally to borrow trouble of the future.

We are told, however, that protest, even if unnecessary at the trial, should have been made by an assignment of error or in some other appropriate way in connection with the appeal, and this for the reason that by that time, if not before, the defendant was chargeable with knowledge as a result of two decisions of the highest court of Georgia that the statute was destined to be given another meaning.

The decisions relied upon are *Carr v. The State* (No. 1), 176 Ga. 55, and *Carr v. The State* (No. 2), 176 Ga. 747. The first of these cases was decided in November, 1932, before the trial of the appellant, which occurred in January, 1933. The second was decided in March, 1933, after the appellant had been convicted, but before the denial or submission of his motion for a new trial. Neither is decisive of the question before us now.

*Carr v. The State*, No. 1, came up on demurrer to an indictment. The prosecution was under Sec. 58 of the Penal Code, which makes it a crime to circulate revolutionary documents. (Note No. 1).

All that was held was that upon the face of the indictment there had been a wilful incitement to violence, sufficient, if proved, to constitute a crime.

The opinion contains an extract covering about four pages from the opinion of this court in *Gitlow v. New York*, supra. Imbedded in that long quotation are the words now pointed to by the state as decisive of the case at hand. They are the words of Sanford, J., writing for this court. 268 U.S. at p. 669. "The immediate danger is none the less real and substantial, because the effect of a given utterance cannot be accurately foreseen."

A state "cannot reasonably be required to defer the adoption of measures for its own peace and safety until the revolutionary utterances lead to actual



disturbances of the public peace or imminent and immediate danger of its own destruction; but it may, in the exercise of its judgment, suppress the threatened danger in its incipency."

To learn the meaning of these words in their application to the Georgia statute we must read them in their setting. Sanford, J., had pointed out that the statute then before him, the New York criminal anarchy act, forbade the teaching and propagation by spoken word or writing of a particular form of doctrine, carefully defined and after such definition denounced on reasonable grounds as fraught with peril to the state.

There had been a determination by the state through its legislative body that such utterances "are so inimical to the general welfare and involve such danger of substantive evil that they may be penalized in the exercise of its police power." 268 U.S. at p. 668.

In such circumstances, "the question whether any specific utterance coming within the prohibited class is likely, in and of itself, to bring about the substantive evil, is not open to consideration. It is sufficient that the statute itself be constitutional and that the use of the language comes within its prohibition." 268 U.S. 670.

In effect the words had been placed upon an expurgatory index. At the same time the distinction was sharply drawn between statutes condemning utterances identified by a description of their meaning and statutes condemning them by reference to the results that they are likely to induce. "It is clear that the question in such cases (i.e. where stated doctrines are denounced) is entirely different from that involved in those cases where the statute merely prohibits certain acts involving the danger of substantive evil, without any reference to language itself, and it is sought to apply its provisions to language used by the defendant for the purpose of bringing about the prohibited results." pp. 670, 671. Cf. *Whitney v. California*, supra., *Fiske v. Kansas*, supra.

The effect of all this was to leave the question open whether in cases of the second class, in cases, that is to say, where the unlawful quality of words is to be determined not upon their face but in relation to their consequences, the opinion in *Schenck v. United States*, supplies the operative rule. The conduct charged to this appellant--in substance an attempt to enlarge the membership of the Communist party in the city of Atlanta--falls, it will be assumed, within the second of these groupings, but plainly is outside the first.

There is no reason to believe that the Supreme Court of Georgia, when it quoted from the opinion in *Gitlow's* case, rejected the restraints which the author of that opinion had placed upon his words. For the decision of the case before it there was no need to go so far. Circulation of documents with intent to incite to revolution had been charged in an indictment. The state had the power to punish such an act as criminal, or so the court had held. How close the nexus would have to be between the attempt and its projected consequences was a matter for the trial.

*Carr v. The State*, No. 2, like the case under review, was a prosecution under Penal Code Section 56 (not Section 58), and like *Carr v. The State*, No. 1, came up on demurrer. All that the court held was that when attacked by demurrer the indictment would stand. This appears from the headnote, the court states that it may be "useful and salutary" to repeat what it had written in *Carr v. The State*, No. 1. Thereupon it quotes copiously from its opinion in that case, including the bulk of the same extracts from *Gitlow v. New York*. The extracts show upon their face that they have in view a statute denouncing a particular doctrine and prohibiting attempts to teach it. They give no test of the bond of union between an idea and an event.

What has been said as to the significance of the opinions in the two cases against Carr has confirmation in what happened when appellant was brought to trial. The judges who presided at that trial had the first of those opinions before him when he charged the jury, or so we may assume. He did not read it as taking from the state the burden of establishing a clear and present danger that insurrection would ensue as a result of the defendant's conduct. This is obvious from the fact that in his charge he laid that very burden on the state with emphasis and clarity. True, he did not have before him the opinion in prosecution No. 2, for it had not yet been handed down, but if he had seen it, he could not have gathered from its quotation of the earlier case that it was announcing novel doctrine.

From all this it results that Herndon, this appellant, came into the highest court of Georgia without notice that the statute defining his offense was to be given a new meaning. There had been no rejection, certainly no unequivocal rejection, of the doctrine of *Schenck v. United States*, which had been made the law of the case by the judge presiding at his trial.

For all that the record tells us, the prosecuting officer acquiesced in the charge, and did not ask the appellate court to apply a different test. In such a situation the appellant might plant himself as he did on the position that on the case given to the jury his guilt had not been proven. He was not under a duty to put before his judges the possibility of a definition less favorable to himself, and make an argument against it when there had been no threat of any change, still less any forecast of its form or measure. He might wait until the law of the case had been rejected by the reviewing court before insisting that the effect would be an invasion of his constitutional immunities.

If invasion should occur, a motion for rehearing diligently pressed thereafter would be seasonable notice. This is the doctrine of *Missouri v. Gehrner* and *Brinkerhoff-Faris v. Hill*. It is the doctrine that must prevail if the general securities of the Constitution are not to be lost in a web of procedural entanglements.

New strength is given to consideration such as these when one passes to a closer view of just what the Georgia court did in its definition of the statute. We have heard that the meaning had been fixed by what had been held already in *Carr v. The State*, and that thereby the imminence of the danger had been shown to be unrelated to innocence or guilt.

But if that is the teaching of those cases, it was discarded by the very judgment now subjected to review. True, the Georgia court, by its first opinion in the case at hand, did prescribe a test that, if accepted, would bar the consideration of proximity in time. "It is immaterial whether the authority of the state was in danger of being subverted or that an insurrection actually occurred or was impending." "Force must have been contemplated, but . . . the statute does not include either its occurrence or its imminence as an ingredient of the particular offense charged."

It would not be "necessary to guilt that the alleged offender should have intended that an insurrection should follow instantly, or at any given time, but it would be sufficient that he intended it to happen at any time, as a result of his influence, by those whom he sought to incite."

On the motion for rehearing the Georgia court repelled with a little heat the argument of council that these words were to be taken literally, without "the usual reasonable implications." "The phrase 'at any time,' as criticized in the motion for rehearing, was not intended to mean at any time in the indefinite future, or at any possible later time, however remote." "On the contrary the phrase 'at any time' was necessarily intended, and should have been understood, to mean within a reasonable time; that is, within such time as one's persuasion or other adopted means might reasonably be expected to be directly operative in causing an insurrection." "Under the statute as thus interpreted, we say, as before, that the evidence was sufficient to authorize the conviction."

There is an unequivocal rejection of the test of clear and present danger, yet a denial also of responsibility without boundaries in time. True, in this rejection, the court disclaimed a willingness to pass upon the question as one of constitutional law, assigning as a reason that no appeal to the Constitution had been made upon the trial or then considered by the judge. *Brown v. State*, 114 Ga. 60; *Loflin v. Southern Security Co.*, 162 Ga. 730; *Dunaway v. Gore*, 164, Ga. 219, 230.

Such a rule of state practice may have the effect of attaching a corresponding limitation to the jurisdiction of this court where fault can fairly be imputed to an appellant for the omission to present the question sooner, *Erie R. Co., v. Purdy*, 185 U.S. 148; *Louisville & Nashville R. Co. v. Woodford*, 234 U.S. 46, 51. No such consequence can follow where the ruling of the trial judge has put the Constitution out of the case and made an appeal to its provisions impertinent and futile. Cf. *Missouri v. Gehrner*, supra; *Rogers v. Alabama*, 192 U.S. 226, 230.

In such circumstances, the power does not reside in a state by any rule of local practice to restrict the jurisdiction of this court in the determination of a constitutional question brought into the case thereafter. *David v. Weschler*,

263 U.S. 22, 24. If the rejection of the test of clear and present danger was a denial of fundamental liberties, the path is clear for us to say so.

What was brought into the case upon the motion for rehearing was a standard wholly novel, the expectancy of life to be ascribed to the persuasive power of an idea. The defendant had no opportunity in the state court to prepare his argument accordingly. He had no opportunity to argue from the record that guilt was not a reasonable inference, or one permitted by the Constitution, on the basis of that test any more than on the basis of others discarded as unfitting. Cf. *Fiske v. Kansas*, supra.

The argument thus shut out is submitted to us now. Will men "judging in calmness" (Brandeis, J., in *Schefer v. United States*, supra, at p. 483) say of the defendant's conduct as shown forth in the pages of this record that it was an attempt to stir up revolution through the power of his persuasion and within the time when that persuasion might be expected to endure?

If men so judging will say yes, will the Constitution of the United States uphold a reading of the statute that will lead to that response? Those are the questions that the defendant lays before us after conviction of a crime punishable by death in the discretion of the jury. I think he should receive an answer.

Mr. Justice Brandeis and Mr. Justice Stone join in this opinion.

As reproduced in Angelo Herndon, *Let Me Live* (New York, 1969), pp. 391-403.

#### 71. ANGELO HERNDON IS FREE!

By L. P.

The announcement on April 26th of the United States Supreme Court, declaring that Angelo Herndon was unconditionally free, marks the culmination of a historic five-year struggle on the part of more than a million Negroes and whites in the United States for the freedom of this heroic young Negro.

Angelo Herndon had organized and led a demonstration of hungry unemployed Negroes and whites in Atlanta, Georgia to demand relief from the County Commissioners. The Commissioners had repeatedly said that there were no funds for relief but when a thousand determined hungry Negro and white workers and farmers united and in a procession unheard of in the annals of the reactionary South marched to the city hall demanding relief, the commissioners were forced to grant an immediate sum of \$6,000 to the unemployed. The news of this successful demonstration of united Negro and white toilers rapidly spread throughout the county and the Georgia rulers fearing that such united action would be repeated made up their minds to "get" Herndon.

One week later Herndon was arrested while walking out of the Post Office where he had received his mail. His mail contained literature which any working class organizer would receive. But this literature was used against Herndon on a charge of "inciting to insurrection" under the provision of a law passed in 1861. This law was originally passed to quell rebellious slaves and is even more savage than the "criminal syndicatist" laws of California, Illinois and many others.

Herndon was convicted by an all white jury and sentenced to eighteen to twenty years on the Georgia chain gang. In reality, of course, this was a death sentence. No man can live for eighteen years on a Georgia chain gang--a torture camp beyond description.

The campaign for the freedom of Angelo Herndon has been led for these five-years by the International Labor Defense, which has been ably assisted by the Joint Committee to Aid the Herndon Defense, consisting of the American Civil Liberties Union, the Methodist Federation of Social Service, the General Defense League, Church League for Industrial Democracy and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. This Committee not only raised funds and engaged able counsel but succeeded in rallying a mass movement and stimulating activities which brought the case to the attention of the whole world. 1,500,000 people signed a petition for Herndon's release. These signatures came not only from America but from all parts of Europe; the signers

included congressmen, mayors, judges and senators.

The whole issues of free speech, free assemblage, and the right to organize in the South were involved in the Herndon case. Above all, the case exposed the restriction of democratic rights, particularly of the Negro people.

The fact that Angelo Herndon was freed through the mass protest of Negroes and whites, through the unity in their determination that this young heroic Negro would not be sent to the Georgia chain gang--that inhuman torture camp--is significant. These people realizing the miserable conditions under which the workers in the South are forced to live, realize that it was not only a fight to save the life of one individual but that this could not be separated from the struggle for the freedom of 15,000,000 Negroes, a fight for the Negro people to be treated as citizens. It was a fight to wipe out a vicious unconstitutional law passed in the days of slavery and used to oppress the wage slaves, Negro and white today. This fight has been won.

From the little demonstration of 1,000 Negro and white in Atlanta, Georgia, organized by Herndon, the unity of white and Negro toilers has grown to literally millions marching side by side in the struggle to free the young working class leader. The Herndon victory is their victory. It is these same people and millions more who must march to ever greater victories.

*The Black Worker*, 7 (June, 1937): 3.



PART VI

BLACK LABOR AT THE CROSSROADS

## BLACK LABOR AT THE CROSSROADS

For years blacks had urged the AFL leadership to outlaw racial discrimination within the federation and honor its promises to organize Negro workers. At every step, however, the AFL leadership and nearly all the affiliated unions stubbornly opposed such a move. There had been temporary alternatives such as the IWW, the TUEL, and the TUUL unions, but none had reached a significant number of Afro-American workers.

There had been some local success, even within the AFL. In 1925, for example, Frank Crosswaith, a black socialist, established the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers. As secretary of the TUC, he urged blacks to demand admission to established unions, and tried to convince the unions that they should accept black members. In early 1934, Crosswaith established the Harlem Labor Committee to cooperate with AFL unions seeking to organize blacks, and to conduct organizational campaigns for those unions. On January 6, 1935, the HLC staged the largest mass meeting of black workers ever held in Harlem, numbering over 4,000. Out of the HLC grew the Negro Labor Committee, founded on July 20, 1935. An inter-racial executive committee, with Crosswaith as chairman, fought for black equality in the labor movement until the organization's demise in 1965. However, the NLC's successes were limited and exceptional.

But in the mid-thirties circumstances existed which had no precedent in the history of American labor. Fueled by the high level of unemployment resulting from the worst depression America had ever endured, a movement emerged out of the 1935 AFL convention to organize the unorganized in the mass production industries. This was the Committee for Industrial Organization, the CIO, founded on November 9, 1935. The National Labor Relations Act, giving workers the right to vote for the union of their choice along with other provisions, became federal law that year. CIO leaders, John L. Lewis chief among them, recognized that blacks could hold the balance of power between union and non-union whites in the steel, auto, rubber, and meat-packing industries, which would form the backbone of the new union movement. Also, it had long been clear that industrial unionism could not succeed unless all workers in the particular industry were organized. More importantly, blacks were concentrated in strategic geographic locations in some industries. For example, blacks composed nearly seventy per cent of the steel and iron employees in Alabama.

In retrospect, Afro-American workers stood at an important historical crossroads in 1935-1936. After a long and basically fruitless effort to enter the labor movement, they now had to determine whether it was in their interest to support the CIO. Although most traditional leaders, especially among the clergy, urged black workers to continue to place their trust in the employers, more progressive groups, such as the National Negro Congress and the NAACP, quickly came to the support of the CIO as the best available hope for improving the economic condition of Negro industrial workers. It took an act of faith when little faith could be justified by past experience.

Part VI documents the issues confronting blacks at this important juncture in the mid-thirties; their response is the subject of Volume VII in this series.

## BLACK WORKERS AND THE UNIONS

## 1. AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SOUTH

By Langston Hughes <sup>124</sup>

White workers of the South:

Miners,  
Farmers,  
Mechanics,  
Millhands,  
Shop girls,  
Railway men,  
Servants,  
Tobacco workers,  
Share croppers,

GREETINGS.

I am the black worker.  
Listen:

That the land might be ours,  
And the mines and the factories  
and the office towers  
At Harlan, Richmond, Gastonia,  
Atlanta, New Orleans,  
That the plants, and the roads and  
the tools of power  
Be ours.

For me, no more the great migration to the North.  
Instead: Migration into force and power--  
Tuskegee with a red flag on the tower!  
On every lynching tree, a poster crying FREE  
Because, O poor white workers,  
You have linked your hands with me.

We did not know that we were brothers.  
Now we know!  
Out of that brotherhood  
Let power grow!  
We did not know  
That we were strong  
Now we see  
In union lies our strength.  
Let union be  
The force that breaks the time-clock,  
Smashes misery,  
Takes land,  
Takes factories,  
Takes office towers,  
Takes tools and banks and mines,  
Railroads, ships and dams,  
Until the forces of the world  
are ours.



White worker,  
Here is my hand.

Today,  
We're man to man.  
Let us forget what Booker T. said,  
"Separate as the fingers,  
He knew he lied.

Let us become instead, you and I,  
One single hand  
That can united rise  
To smash the old dead dogmas of the past--  
To kill the lies of color  
That keep the rich enthroned  
And drive us to the time-clock and the plow.  
Helpless, stupid, scattered and alone--and now--  
Race against race  
Because one is black  
Another white of face.

Let us new lessons learn,  
All workers  
New life-ways make,  
One union form:  
Until the future burns out  
Every past mistake.  
Let us get together, say:  
"You are my brother, black or white.  
You are my sister--now--today,"

*Southern Worker*, February 10, 1934.

## 2. NOTICE

### CENTRAL TRADES AND LABOR UNION

St. Louis, Mo. March, 1920

Gentlemen:--

We wish to call your attention to the fact that the American Hotel and American Annex Hotel locked out their white Union Waiters in 1913 and replaced them with negro strike breakers. They also employ underpaid non-union Musicians, Cooks and Barbers. In 1915 they discharged their negro waiters who had the courage to join a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Efforts have been made by the Organized Labor Movement from time to time to try and adjust these differences.

The management of these hotels absolutely refuses to deal with the representatives of the different unions. They continue to employ underpaid negro waiters and parties and banquets are being served by underpaid negro women. You can guess what kind of service this means. In fact, it is unjust to the City of St. Louis to try and make visitors and others believe that the American and American Annex Hotels are up to the standard of our other hotels.

Therefore, we beg of you to investigate these statements and judge for yourself. We also request your organization or association to refrain from giving parties, banquets or in any way patronizing these unfair hotels until such time as they agree to be fair and just to organized labor and give the public the class of service they are paying for.

Pass this word to your friends. Place this notice in a conspicuous place where it can be read and publish it in your Magazine or Journal.

Give it the utmost publicity from coast to coast and help us to make these unfair hotels comply with the request of Organized Labor.

Thanking you for past favors, we remain,

Yours fraternally,

WAITERS' UNION, LOCAL #20.  
COOKS' UNION, LOCAL #203.  
COLORED WAITERS' ALLIANCE, LOCAL #353.  
BARBERS' LOCAL #102.  
MUSICIANS' LOCAL #2, A.F. of M.  
SOFT DRINK DISPENSERS' LOCAL #51.

Endorsed by the Central Trades and Labor Union of St. Louis.

International Fur Workers' Union Archives.

### 3. A WARNING TO COLORED LABORERS

If we are charged with more than any one position, it is the optimistic spirit that characterizes the life of this publication and its editor, as well as the entire official family. We are not alarmists, nor are we of the pessimistic kind.

We have had in Alabama, and for that matter throughout the country, four years of plenty, the most lucrative years in all the history of our state and nation; men have made thousands and thousands of dollars; many poor laboring men have become good livers, secured comfortable homes and have a reasonable community, commercial rating. Some of our successful men have become known to the entire country because of the progress they have made in achievements. The signs now indicate a change. Many sections of the North are closing down their factories and material necessities are growing cheaper as time goes on. One of the chief products of the laboring man, cotton, has reduced in price so as to alarm the entire country; other things are gradually coming down. Labor is going to fall, not in proportion, but at a greater percentage than these necessities are reducing. The time is now for every man who is earning a dollar to exercise extreme carefulness, settle off your mortgage debt, clear up every liability, place the money that is left in the bank, put in every hour you possibly can and every day that you are permitted to work. Wages are coming down! Men will not pay more for labor than they can get for the thing that labor produces. It might be three, six, or eight months before we are affected by this necessary change; the time to protect one's self is when the opportunity is offered. The opportunity is here today, and we appeal to every man, woman and child, who must work, and all of us should do some work, to save the money, quit putting it into flashy things, buy the necessities of life, and be prepared for the rainy day. It is as sure to come as night follows day.

There are a number of men in the district and throughout the state who have been persuaded off their jobs, told to quit work for the mere recognition of a Union. The colored man has no time for such rot as this, his backer is his muscle, his brain. His success depends largely on how much common sense he will exercise to hold the job and make the money, not how much he will be recognized in a union, but how well he can please the men he is working for and how much he can get for the work done. Anything else is against him and takes away that which he seems to have, and that is an opportunity to work, be happy on the job, take care of his family, educate his children, be independent in his own circle and with his own group.

*Birmingham Reporter*, October 9, 1920.

## 4. NEGRO WORKERS REFUSE PITTANCE TO LABOR

From an account in the morning paper, we gather that hundreds of Negro workers stampeded from the Welfare Department, and the Employment office when they were offered work.

It was not stated why they left, but the fact that these men were offered the magnificent wage of \$1.25 per day for ten or more hours is the real reason for the refusal of these men to go to work.

A dollar and a quarter per day in these days! Why, it would not feed a healthy man, let alone his family; it would not pay the rent man, the furniture man, or any other creditor.

This action shows just what is being done by those who desire to employ labor; they have starved, forced to privation, and done all that could be done to cow men and workers into abject submission to the dictates of an intolerant employing autocracy, and now these people think that perhaps labor is hungry enough to go to work for a miserable pittance, less than enough to keep body and soul together, and the newspapers roast them because they refuse to accept such wages.

The public should be kept informed about these matters, so that it can judge impartially.

A dollar and a quarter a day! We don't blame any person for refusing such wages.

*Birmingham Labor Advocate*, July 2, 1921.

## 5. LABOR UNIONS AND THE NEGRO

The history of the Negro laborer and the Trade Union Movement is but another aspect of his struggle for status in the industries of Baltimore. Essentially he is a buffer between the employers and the unions. This is an unfortunate position, for there is no security in either stronghold. His relation to his job takes on the nature of a vicious circle. In the unionized crafts he may not work unless he belongs to a union, and the most frequent, specious argument advanced by the unions is that he cannot become a member unless he is already employed. The result is frequently that he neither gets a job nor joins a union. The labor union movement, although recognizing the necessity for removing the menace of strikebreakers through unionization with most astonishing inconsistency (a few instances excepted) deliberately opposes the organization of Negroes as a menace to the trade.

On the other hand, employers recognize in Negroes the most powerful weapon of opposition to the excessive demands of the unions. The impending shadow of Negroes as strike-breakers has staved off many strikes and lost for the strikers many others. As a further complication of an already bad situation, the most common procedure of the employers is to dismiss their Negro workers as soon as their purposes have been served. Bitterness of feeling between the white and Negro workers as a result of these tactics is inevitable.

The situation at present is one that admits little light. Employers may with generous grace pass the responsibility for exclusion to the unions, while the unions with equal grace pass it back to employers. However, it is a fact that in the "open" shops there is an almost complete exclusion of Negroes from the skilled positions and many of the semi-skilled ones for which the unions are in no sense responsible; and in practically all of the independent crafts, such as carpentry, brick masonry, plumbing and steam-fitting, there is an almost total exclusion for which the employers are not responsible. For in the former case union organizations are not tolerated, and in the latter employers willing to use Negroes have been definitely prohibited by the unions.

The Baltimore Federation of Labor lists 114 locals in the city affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. This list divides itself into three parts: (a) those crafts in which Negroes are not employed; (b) those crafts in which Negroes are employed but are not admitted into the unions, and

(c) those lines of work in which Negroes are employed and are permitted to organize separate locals.

Fifty-four unions fall into this first group. The second is made up largely of independent crafts unions--carpentry, brick masonry, plumbing and steam-fitting, painting and decorating, paper-hanging and mechanics--all of which exclude Negroes from membership.

In the third group are locals in which Negroes have membership but are organized without exception in separate locals. They are as follows:

Unions	Membership
The Longshoremen	800
International Hod Carriers and Common Laborers No. 644	250
Station Employes Association	150
(Under the jurisdiction of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks)	
Musicians Association	60
Freight Handlers No. 17393	700
Federal Employes	20
Total	<hr/> 1980

These are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

There are other independent labor organizations as follows:

The Consolidated Hod Carriers No. 1;  
 The International Building Laborers Protective Association No. 3;  
 The National Hod Carriers and Common Laborers No. 124;  
 The Railway Men's Benevolent and Protective Association.

The independent labor organizations, although figures on membership were not available, have a combined membership estimated at 1900. This totals about 3880.

The range of wages for Negroes at the time of the survey during March, April and May of 1922, averaged \$14.50 per week for fifty-eight hours in the fertilizer works. Overtime, however, was permitted, and as much as \$17.50 per week can be earned in this manner. A much higher range of pay is obtained in the metal trades. Although this rate varied widely between plants, the most common rate for unskilled work was twenty-five cents an hour; thirty-four cents an hour for semi-skilled, and from fifty to sixty-five cents an hour for skilled work. Although there was observed no important instances of discriminatory rates for whites and Negroes working on the same jobs and performing the same processes, it rarely occurs that the two races are mixed, and over 75% of all the Negroes working were confined to the branches of work yielding the lowest pay.

Despite the comparatively low range of income, the Negro population pays relatively the highest rents of any group in the city. Over 100% more Negro women are forced to work away from home than native white of mixed parentage or foreign born whites.

The experiences of employers of Negro labor indicate that in a majority of instances, satisfactory results have been obtained. There is, however, a disposition to avoid breaking with the tradition of using Negroes only for certain grades of work. The Negro propulation on the other hand, while chaffing under these restrictions, is immersed in the community's policy of conservatism and their protests weak and scattered, as a result, have little effect.

*Opportunity*, 1 (June, 1923): 19.

## 6. WHITE SUPREMACY IN ORGANIZED LABOR

By Chandler Owen

Two decades ago it was Booker T. Washington who said: "In the South

the Negro can make a dollar but can't spend it, while in the North the Negro can spend a dollar but can't make one." Here Mr. Washington was referring to the comparative ease with which Negro bricklayers, plasterers, painters, moulders, carpenters, and Negro mechanics in general, could get work in the South at their respective trades, but were so proscribed in their privileges of entering such places of public accommodation and amusement as theatres, restaurants, pullman cars, and the like as to amount almost to a denial of spending their money. At the same time he noticed that whereas the Negro might freely (?) spend his money in most of such places in the North, still there the labor unions had so completely shut out of the trades all but "white-black men" who could "pass"--to all intents and purposes the Negro could not make a dollar.

In all parts of the United States the Negroes are generally opposed to labor unions. They favor the open shop. It is not facetious to state that many Negroes understand the term "closed shop" to mean "closed to Negroes." Though such is not its etymological history, in substance the closed shop has meant just about that. It still means that in a large area of labor circles. This is true of the railroad brotherhoods and the machinists, who with brutal frankness have embodied in their constitutions Negro exclusion clauses. Many other unions lacking the written boldness to "write out" their black, nevertheless "read him out" religiously in practice. The machinists put into their constitution: "Each member agrees to introduce into this union no one but a sober, industrious white man." Part of this rule is not lived up to judging from the alcoholic breath which we have sometimes smelt at machinists' meetings. Still it was white breath!

#### White Men's Jobs

Among the various methods employed for keeping out Negro workers many unions have combined with their employers in proclaiming certain lines of labor as "a white man's job." For instance, conductor is a white man's job. There is no question of efficiency involved here since all it requires to be a conductor is the physical power to clip and take up a ticket and a good memory. And every traveler will attest these are exceptional possession of the pullman porter. He can and often does collect tickets from the passengers, while his memory is so excellent he can quickly take in and bear in mind over several days each passenger and the baggage which goes with him.

Motorman--street car, elevated and subway--is a white man's job. (Detroit is probably the only city in America which employs Negroes.) Yet Negroes make splendid chauffeurs. We submit, too, 'tis much more difficult to run an automobile through a crowded city like New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, where guiding and steering are demanded, than it is to run a street car, subway or elevated train chiefly down a straight track.

Next, railroad engineer is considered a white man's job. We cannot resist the temptation to tell an incident which happened about two years ago when the railroad brotherhoods were conferring at Chicago relative to calling a strike. Southerners, of course, were present. At one time when the strike call seemed imminent, Southern delegates from Georgia and Texas, mind you, rose and opposed it. Said these gentlemen: *"We cannot afford to strike, because my fireman is a Negro who can run the train as well as I can. In fact he does run the train most of the time. So if we strike the bosses will put the Negroes in our places."* It needs no comment that if the Negro can run the train, and does run it most of the time, he ought to get both the pay and the name or credit for being engineer. At the present time Negroes get everything but the pay and the public credit.

Moreover, telephone operator is a "white woman's job." Telephone companies nowhere employ Negro operators in the exchanges. We discover no justifiable reason--certainly no efficiency excuse. Colored girls in New York frequently operate switchboards for apartment houses which hold a population bigger than many American towns!

Again, even the telegraph companies attempt to make the messenger boy service a "no-Negro" service, notwithstanding the fact that colored boys can run across a city delivering messages as rapidly and as efficiently as white boys.

At the outset I stated white employers and white unions combined in

propagating the psychology of certain jobs as "white men's jobs." An illustration of this came to us a few years ago in the building trades. A Negro electrician went to an employer for a job. The employer informed him: *"We employ only union labor. If you get a union card we shall be glad to give you a job."* When the young colored electrician made application to the electricians' union for membership, the union officials informed him: *"We take in only persons who are working on the job. If you get on the job, we will grant you a union card."* Whereupon the Negro could get neither into the union nor on the job, because each party--employer and union--set up a condition which could only be met by the other.

#### Negroes Lost Confidence in White Unions

It is obvious the Negroes could not secure or retain confidence in white unions so long as everything--from pretext, ruse and evasion to brutal frankness--excluded them from the labor unions. Naturally and properly the man of color decided: *"What care I how fair she be, if she be not fair to me?"* It is better to have low wages than no wages! The Negro quite sanely prefers a lower standard of living, as a result of the closed shop!

#### Flirting With the Employers

Self-preservation is an instinct. All sentient organisms act upon this basic principle. The employers, understanding the psychology, have appealed to the Negro worker on the ground that white unions were the Negro's enemies. Proof was never lacking; on the contrary, the evidence was abundant. For the paucity of instances of trade union fairness to Negroes presented by union advocates the bosses could marshal a plethora of hostile instances. Most Negroes could fall back on their own experiences. Nor was it difficult to make a test case in any city any day. (It is not difficult even now!) Consequently Negro workers were and are ever ready to take the places of union strikers. They are coddled by the employers and repulsed by the unions. White employers are and a large extent have been, the Negro workers' patrons, while the white workers have been chiefly their competitors. Patrons aid while competitors fight. One is your friend, the other your enemy. Everybody likes to get in a blow at his enemy, revenge being sweet. Add to this sweet revenge the sweetness of economic income and the blow is sweeter! The labor unions of America have frequently felt this blow. Negroes have participated as strike breakers in most great American strikes. They have been a thorn in the strikers' side in such big strikes as the steel, the miners', packing, long-shoremen's, waiters', railroad shopmen's and other strikes.

#### Employers Put Negroes in Unions

In business there is first competition, then combination. From 1873 to 1898 was the period of large scale business in the United States. The period was noted for railroad rate cutting, clashes between the Standard Oil and other independent oil companies, steel, automobile, tobacco and banking "cut-throat competition." Then came pooling, monopolies, trusts, syndicates--"combinations in restraint of trade." Competition was said to be the "life of business." It was really the death of more. Each business tried to destroy its competitor until the process grew so wasteful and destructive that those businesses which did survive decided that cooperation--combination, peace--was better than competition, opposition, warfare. Businesses then combined--business which had done all they could to kill each other.

The world of labor is little different from the world of business. White labor has constantly fought to keep Negroes out of the industries--not especially because of a dislike for Negroes but because to limit the supply of labor would increase the demand for white workers, raise their wages, shorten their hours, and extend their tenure of employment. The unions even try to limit white apprentices, also white women. But one day along would come a strike. White men walk out. They want more wages, shorter hours--some demand the employers are unwilling to grant. The white bosses send out an S.O.S. for Negro workers. The Negroes reply as it were: *"We are coming, Father Abraham, hundreds of thousands strong!"* White employers take on the Negroes, not because they (the white employers) particularly like the Negroes, but because they

*like black labor cheap better than white labor dear!"*

Then is it that white workers learn the lesson of the bosses' disregard for white supremacy. They (the white workers) see the Negroes in the industries. The white unionists cannot get them out. "How can the Negro workers be made to help us?" the white workers ask. "Lo and behold! the thing to do is to take them into our unions where we can at least get dues from them which will pay white officials' salaries in good jobs and help the union generally." And just as business is combining with its competitor does not do so because it like the competitor any better (but because it could not kill its competitor), so the union white men in admitting Negroes do not do so because the white men like the Negro workers better, but because they could not keep the Negroes out of the industry--that is, they could not destroy their colored laboring competitors.

Herein we are called upon to state a truth which we have nowhere seen expressed in the radical and labor literature: *"The white employers and capitalists have placed the Negro workers both into the industries, and consequently into the unions, while the white trade unions have kept the Negroes out of both the unions and the industries, so long as they could!"* This question must be faced by labor leaders and organized white labor. The Negro worker may not be able to state the philosophy and the theories underlying the situation, but he is well aware of the facts. We have just returned from a long trip to the Pacific coast, during which time we passed through Topeka. Here the Santa Fe Railroad put in Negro shopmen, machinists, etc., during the shopmen's strike. The employers are keeping the Negroes in the shops despite labor union opposition. The unions are in a terrible dilemma. They cannot call upon the Negroes to join the unions because the unions exclude Negroes as members. The employers would no doubt discharge the Negroes if they did join the union. What inducement can the unions offer as presently constituted? And if the Negro workers are not right, wherein are they wrong?

#### Machinery and Labor Movement

There are two forces which capital is adopting today. Sometimes it moves the machinery or capital to the labor and raw materials. This is what generally happens as the result of imperialism in undeveloped countries like the West Indies, Mexico, parts of South America, Central America, Haiti and Nicaragua. Capital sends machinery right where the labor supply is overwhelming and the raw materials abundant.

The other method is to attract labor to the machinery, the raw materials and industry. That is what is going on in the case of the present large Negro migration. Negro labor, attracted from the South to the North by higher wages, is coming to the steel districts of Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Ohio, and Duluth, Minnesota; to the automobile center of Detroit; the packing districts of St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas City and Omaha; as longshoremen to the ports like New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Boston, and to the great industrial centers of the East and central West.

#### What Will the Unions Do?

The Negro workers at last are here. They are in many industries now; they will be in more shortly; eventually they will be in all. What will the unions do--take the Negroes in or permit them sullenly and inevitably to build up a veritable "scab union" ever ready, willing and anxious to take the places of the white workers?

We are face to face with a serious problem--the two chief problems of America--the Negro and organized labor. Most men, white and black, are working men. They are struggling for food, clothing, fuel and shelter; which means they are struggling for the means of life--the things upon which life depends. They do not fight because they hate each other, but they hate each other because they are constantly fighting each other. In the struggle to live each man usually decides his life is more important to him than anybody else's. And where there is not enough work to go around, there will be a fight to secure the limited goods. It is a widely accepted opinion that there is some special, instinctive race hatred, peculiarly high between Negroes and Irish and Negroes and Southern whites. The explanation is to be found in labor competition. The labor being skilled, Negroes did not clash with the

Jews who were in the men's and women's clothing, cap making, fur and jewelry industry. They did not compete with the German in watch making, coat making, machinist and engineering. Negroes did, however, engage in subway digging, longshoring, street cleaning, hauling and elevator running--the unskilled lines of work largely done by the Irish, also, and by unskilled white Southerners--unskilled chiefly because of the low degree of education given in Dixie.

Today we have Hampton Institute and Tuskegee both of which are representative of about 200 institutions in the United States where Negroes are trained to be skilled mechanics in all lines, and also taught scientific agriculture. The white capitalists have well endowed the two above named institutions. Seldom does a rich person die in the United States without leaving a goodly sum to one or both. There was, there is, vision in these gifts. The white capitalists are training Negro mechanics to hold in check the whites in the skilled lines, just as the unskilled Negro has done tremendous work in breaking strikes, and often so threatening that white men dared not call strikes.

We have far-reaching contacts with white organized labor. We have spoken before their central bodies from New York to Seattle and Los Angeles. Many unions are open to Negroes--some freely. The needle trades seldom show race lines in the International Ladies' Garment Workers, the Fur Workers, Cap Makers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers. We find in some sections Negroes in the bricklayers', plasterers', carpenters', and painters' unions. We shall not be satisfied, however, till Negroes are in all.

There is an objection, a criticism and complaint which all the unions--radical, progressive and conservative must share alike--the absence of Negroes in administrative capacities. The labor unions of America collect millions of dollars in dues and pay millions of dollars in salaries. So far as we know, however (and we have investigated it thoroughly inquiring from Mr. Gompers and other labor leaders) there is no full time decently paid Negro organizer or official in the American labor movement! The labor unions very nearly approximate the South in taxation of Negroes without representation--for that is all that dues paying without holding administrative positions means. This is not creditable or defensible by the American labor unions. Negro girls in the International Ladies' Garment Workers (overwhelmingly Socialistic and radical), the Negro men in the United Mine Workers, the steel, packing, longshoremen's, plasterers' and bricklayers', and the building trades unions in general, are too large in number, too variegated in ability and pay too much money in dues not to have representation among the officers, organizers, and business agents.

It yet remains for organized labor to show it is in practice fairer and more enlightened on the race question than organized capital!

*The Messenger*, 5 (September, 1923): 810-11, 819.

## 7. THE MIXED UNION

### Merits and Demerits

By William D. Jones

*Secretary, Philadelphia Longshoremen's Union*

At this period and time when the world is in a condition of dissatisfaction and the cost of living is high, it is absolutely necessary that all workers, regardless of color, should join together in one solid union, in order that they may obtain better living and working conditions, and better support their families.

The Negro is a large factor in American industry. But the trade unions have been shortsighted in not admitting the Negro to membership, and by so doing have forced themselves into the conditions that exist at the present time--into the hands of the employers, who are forcing the open shop, and when necessary, using the Negro for that purpose.



The reason why the Negro has not been admitted to membership in the trade unions is on account of that distinguished slogan: Americanism. It is translated into what is better known as American race prejudice.

The merits of the mixed union are: that it eliminates the feeling of prejudice among the workers and establishes a congenial and most cordial feeling; it teaches each one that all have each other's interests in common; that they can maintain for themselves the best wages and working conditions only so long as they do not allow themselves to be divided. This equality has nothing to do with private social intercourse as has been stated by the employers to keep the workers divided. There is nothing to hinder an individual from selecting his or her social group or personal associates. The sooner the workers learn that they are workers, and that all workers are the same in the employers' eyes, the better off they will be. The sooner they learn this, the sooner will they attain a higher plane of living for themselves and families. There is no way to accomplish such an end as long as the workers are divided on national and racial lines.

It is an undeniable fact that the employers will use one race or one group of workers to defeat the other group. Whenever the employers are successful in destroying the benefits achieved by the most advanced group by using the other group, they also destroy the chances of both groups for advancement. In so doing they succeed in lowering the standard of the workers to a level of poverty.

As long as the workers allow themselves to be used, one group against the other--preventing each other from maintaining a high standard of living--they will not be successful in accomplishing those high ideals and better things for which the human race craves. Not until all the workers are united into one union--and that union will see that each worker's rights are protected regardless of race or nationality--will the working class advance to that higher standard of living.

Mixed unions are the only kind for the workers in this country. They will frustrate the attempt of the employers to use one race against the other. The workers become more interested in each other, and in so doing establish the very key to the situation: Solidarity. Wherever solidarity exists the object, victory which is in view is sure to be accomplished. Having had personal experience in a mixed union for the past ten years, the writer is in a position to know that within that time the members succeeded in advancing their wages and bettering their working conditions to the point where they were the best paid of all unions that are in the same industry in this country. This was on account of solidarity and proves the merits of the mixed union.

Now as to the demerits of the mixed union. In mixed unions there often arises internal controversy, especially when the epithet ("nigger") is used which is the pride of Americans. This usually occurs when they want to take advantage of the other fellow. For instance, if something occurs that is to the advantage of one group and not to the other, there is jealousy and dissatisfaction, with the less fortunate group contending that discrimination has been used. This will keep up an eternal controversy. The best way to overcome such a condition is to use a mixed working force. Especially in selecting officers should this be done.

The writer does not believe in any Negro union that is not part of some craft or industrial union, unless it is in some of those loving states that make it a crime for a Negro to look at a white man or sit beside him. The workers should learn that such laws are to keep them divided and are a special benefit to the capitalist class. Wherever such laws exist the workers themselves should remove the condition by a joint committee to the Negro in being in a separate union. It is true that he would do his own bidding, and, should he receive the largest percentage of the work, there is no doubt that it would be the most laborious kind in the industry. He would be expected to produce more than the white unions and take a smaller wage.

One can readily see that would give the employer the opportunity to defeat both unions and in so doing would benefit only himself. The fact is that all Negro unions are failures, just the same as a craft union. The advancement of labor at this period must be along industrial lines if labor is to receive percentage of the industrial product. In order that the Negro, who is a strong factor in the industrial market today, may receive a fair consideration for his labor, he must be in mixed unions. Wherever a Negro union

exists there should be efforts made to work in conjunction with the other unions to bring about energetic action to obtain higher wages and better working conditions for themselves.

Black and white labor today is learning more about their increased power when closely united to gain greater concessions under the present conditions. It is to be hoped that in the near future all labor will be united for one common cause. It is an undeniable fact that all labor has something in common: a desire for a higher standard of living. This can only be attained through interracial solidarity in the mixed union.

*The Messenger*, 5 (September, 1923): 812.

#### 8. EQUAL DIVISION OF LABOR ON THE WHARF<sup>125</sup>

By the terms of the new wharf labor agreement, an equal number of white men and Negroes will hereafter be employed in loading and unloading ships at Galveston, Texas City, and Houston. Speaking for Galveston, the agreement is of greater moment than might appear on the surface. It applies a timely corrective to a condition that probably would have grown more unsatisfactory if allowed to continue unregulated. As *The News* understands it, the readjustment was dictated more in the interest of the general public than of the master stevedores. No question of relative efficiency was involved. It was simply a matter of bringing about an equitable distribution of the enormous payroll controlled by employers of wharf labor. So important is this source of local income, compared with Galveston's population, that it reaches back into every channel of retail trade. The general consequences of the new arrangement are too well understood to require detailed discussion. For the past several years, about 65 per cent of longshore labor has been done by Negroes.

Several complications have heretofore stood in the way of this realignment. That they have at last been overcome is no small tribute to the fairness of all parties concerned in the negotiations. Both the Negro and the white locals were called upon to make concessions. For the Negroes it required a surrender of about 15 per cent. The white unions gave up the distinction they have hitherto drawn between the loading of cotton and other classes of freight. That was primarily a concession to the employers. It simplifies the conduct of stevedoring operations, since the same local will hereafter handle cotton and other cargo. The number of locals has been reduced from four to two.

It should be a source of gratification that relations between employers and employees are sufficiently cordial to permit a readjustment of this scope to be brought about without friction and with no interruption of work.

*Opportunity*, 3 (January, 1925): 24.

#### 9. J. H. WALKER TO BEN F. FERRIS, APRIL 1, 1925<sup>126</sup>

Springfield, Illinois

Mr. Ben F. Ferris  
1116 West 63rd Street  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Sir and Brother:

As I told you yesterday morning, they would, the three colored representatives voted against our Injunction-Limitation bill, in the house, yesterday forenoon. They did so, because they said that they dare not go home to their districts (my information is that they are living in districts that are

largely populated by colored people) if they voted for any measure which the Trade Union Movement was supporting, on account of the fact that their people say that, the Trade Union Movement is trying to prevent them from making a living in Chicago, particularly citing the action of your local union which refuses to permit colored lathers to belong to their union, and which they say, even where they do belong to a colored local union of your international organization, prevents them from getting work in the general construction work in which the members of the labor movement are employed, in Chicago.

The Dunlap State Military Police bill will come up in committee this afternoon. On that committee is Senator Roberts (colored) from Chicago. He, like the three colored representatives, says he wants to vote for labor's measures, that he would like to vote against this police bill, but he says that on account of union labor being opposed to it, that if he voted in opposition to it, that it would mean his political finish with his people; he says, they tell him that the unions are all against them in Chicago and the cite particularly the action of your local union as aforementioned.

His voting for that bill, will mean that it will come out of committee and be put on the calendar. The vote in the committee is so close, that if he were to vote against it, we could kill it in committee. It may mean that this one vote will result in the Dunlap Military State Police bill being enacted into law in this state, and I can imagine that the members of your local union will not want to be held responsible for the failure of the enactment of our Injunction-Limitation bill; and for the enactment of a State Military Police law. In the one case to prevent judges from breaking strikes, and in the other case, to prevent the enactment of a bill to create a military police force which will be used mainly, to break strikes. In addition to that, it means that these votes and these influence will be *against* every labor measure during the entire session, and *for* every measure to which organized labor is opposed.

I sincerely hope that you will be able to get your local union to change its attitude, because it is not only injurious to all the working men and women, and their families in this state, but it is wrong from the point of view of the Trade Unionists everywhere. The Trade Union Movement does not believe that a man should be discriminated against, just because of the color of his skin. It was founded for the purpose of protecting those who were unable to protect themselves--the weak and helpless, and it should not be used as an instrument of oppression or persecution of the weak and the helpless.

Faternally yours,

J. H. Walker, President.

Victor A. Olander Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

#### 10. THE NEGRO IN INDUSTRY

By T. Arnold Hill  
National Urban League

James Bryce, writing in the revised edition of his *American Commonwealth*, published in 1911, wrote that the negro might "more and more draw southwards into the lower and hotter regions along the coasts of the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico" and might consequently become a "relatively smaller and probably a much smaller element than at present in the population north of" the states of Florida and Louisiana, and parts of the states of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas. But the eminent scholar did not know that the last war would check the gradual movement of the center of negro population toward the South and start it upward again in the direction from which it receded in 1880 when it was in the northeastern corner of Georgia. That the movement of negroes is toward the North, the whole country is aware. There has been a wholesale migration of more than half a million negroes from the South to the North during the past fifteen years.

This regimentation, singularly impressive in the light of facts which are now available on the industrial gains the race has made above the Mason-Dixon Line, presents enormous possibilities which both the employing group and the leaders of organized labor cannot afford to overlook. For the one, the concentrated mass of negro laborers, organized or unorganized, in the largest industrial centers North and South, provides adequate substitutes for immigrant labor, now cut to thirty-two per cent of last year's supply; and for the other, negro workers, advancing daily from common laborers to skilled and semi-skilled operators in the basic industries of the country, provide an ever-increasing harvest for the spread of unionism. In fact the balance of power between capital and labor, may universally become, as indeed it has shown itself to be in several labor controversies, the enigmatic negro, who not infrequently has shown surprising dexterity and alacrity at opportune periods in our nation's history.

Nine states: Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan, and Kansas were the home of more than ninety per cent of the northern negro population in 1920 which numbered 1,472,309, one-half of whom were of southern birth. And there was not a wide distribution within these states, for the principal city within each of them housed more than sixty per cent of the total negro population, with the exception of the state of Ohio, as for instance in New York, seventy-five per cent of the state's total negro population lived in New York City. Detroit and Chicago had sixty-eight and sixty per cent, respectively of their state's population. The cities of the North to which negroes have migrated in largest numbers are shown from the accompanying table. Leaving out Kansas City and Baltimore, which have the reputation of being both North and South, every city in the list increased its colored population during the decade 1910-1920 by more than fifty per cent, except Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

It is not only that the northern population has narrowed itself to a few states and a few cities within these states that is significant, but also the fact that the concentration is in the cities where the North carries on its principle industries. And this is what gives importance to the future position of the colored worker both as regards his continuance in industry and his relationship to the trade union movement.

One-eighth of the workers in industry are colored men and women, who form only one-tenth of the country's total population. This is a refutation of the charge of indolence and a factor worthy of consideration by the employing group and the labor group. It is not in size alone that the negro's labor is a factor--this has long been true--but in diversity, a comparatively recent achievement. Of the more than three hundred classifications of occupations in the census reports of 1920, negroes were at work at all the principal trades, except one, in the largest cities in the country. In the building trades where labor troubles are always present, the negro has shown surprising advancement. Observe the tunnel workers building subways in New York and Philadelphia and you will get a fair sample of the utilization of negroes in trades that once were practically denied them. In the bituminous coal regions of West Virginia, in the steel districts of Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Gary; the meat-packing business of Chicago, St. Louis and Kansas City; on the docks as longshoremen in New York, Baltimore, Norfolk and Philadelphia--in all of which the American Federation of Labor needs members to hold the gains it has made--there are more negro men and women at work than their population ratio of ten per cent. In West Virginia while the negro population is less than seven per cent of the total population, 23,000 negroes, more than eighteen per cent of the colored population are engaged as miners in the state's thirty-five mining counties.

As long as three-fourths of the workers of this race were confined to two occupations--agriculture and domestic and personal service--they were not of much service to either industrialists or the American Federation of Labor, but when industrial and mechanical workers have jumped from 12.6 per cent in 1910 to 18.4 per cent in ten years, they can no longer be ignored. In Chicago, for instance where the negro population increased by 65,000 or 148 per cent from 1910 to 1920, the total number of porters, waiters and male servants increased a scant one per cent during that period. But in the building trades, the packing industry, the steel mills and foundries the male employees of color increased from 3.2 per cent to 20.7 per cent during the same period, and

according to estimates of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations 70,000 negroes were engaged in industry in 1920 as compared with 27,000 in 1910. Statistics for other cities show similar advances. A certain plant in the middle west which in 1919 had eight per cent of its total workman colored had forty per cent colored four years later. Of 1,000 employees in a large wholesale manufacturing plant in the middle west 442 are colored and 547 are white. Of the colored employees there are 237 in skilled, 128 in semi-skilled and 72 in non-skilled operations. The metallurgist is a negro, the chief chemist a negro girl, the nurse in charge of the dispensary, ministering to both white and colored, is a negro girl. More than half of the colored workers have opened savings accounts through the company's office.

Comparison of Negro Population in 1910 and 1920

<i>City</i>	<i>1910</i>	<i>1920</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
New York	91,709	152,467	60,758	66.3
Philadelphia, Pa.	84,559	134,229	49,670	58.7
Chicago, Ill.	44,103	109,458	65,355	148.1
Baltimore, Md.	84,749	108,322	23,573	27.8
Detroit, Mich.	5,741	40,838	35,097	611.3
Pittsburgh, Pa.	25,816	34,678	8,862	34.3
Indianapolis, Ind.	21,816	34,451	12,635	57.9
Kansas City, Mo.	23,566	30,719	7,153	30.4
Cincinnati, Ohio	19,639	30,079	10,440	53.2

But it is this advancement which now presents the most serious complication in the negro's industrial history. His very success may be his undoing. Having proved his efficiency, employers are hiring him in larger numbers and rewarding proficiency by promotion. The more he advances the more will he jeopardize the interests of organized labor if he is out of it, and the more will he benefit the labor movement if he joins it. But if he joins, what of his attractiveness to employers, who are not unmindful of his aloofness to union influence? In short, as union men, will they be wanted in the steel mills, packing houses, the building trades and in industrial pursuits generally? If negroes do not join the unions, 5,000,000 organized workers, many of whom are displeased that negroes are at work in the factories, will be a persistene and unconquerable foe. Thus the negro stands at the crossroads of his industrial future, pondering which of the two paths he should enter. Fortunately for him immigration from Europe, growing less yearly under governmental restrictions, gives him a breathing space. Both the labor movement and employers need the negro, one to attain the goal sought in campaigns for new union members, the other, to keep machinery in motion. It will, therefore, not be convenient or profitable to discharge, or curtail, the hiring of negroes because of their union affiliation, nor will it be expedient to be impatient if they do not fall in line with union propaganda as readily as some desire.

White public opinion condones racial separateness and forces the negro to think first and always of self as a necessary procedure of defense. The one regulatory consideration with all negroes--workers, ministers, educators, editors, authors, social workers and all who shape public opinion--will be, first and last which side, union, or non-union, will benefit the negro worker most? This would not be hard to determine in a country where the color of skin and texture of hair are not paramount to fairness and capacity. It is hard, however, in America, where, despite the negro's often proved capacity and loyalty, he is never certain of his desirability, beyond the point where he serves as a tool or in a temporary emergency.

To reduce our formula to specific terms we must inspect the attitude of the two groups--employers and employees--with references to their treatment of negroes. There are plenty of facts pro and con on both sides, and it would take many more pages than we have at our disposal to enumerate them properly. Employers have hired negroes to break a strike or for temporary periods of business prosperity, only to discharge them when the exigency was over. Other employers, hiring them under the same conditions, have retained the efficient ones when the emergency had passed. Some employers offer advancement for meritorious performance, others will hire them in only the most casual operations, regardless of efficiency and length of service. Some pay the same

wage to colored and white workers, other pay less to colored. As to the unions, some permit negroes to join, and some do not. Some go outside of their union affiliation to influence employers not to hire them, while others appoint union organizers and business agents without regard to color. Some, by constitution declare their organizations open to all workers, white and black, but exclude them by ritualistic provisions and various subterfuges. While others have colored officers and important committee members. And so on there are positive and negative facts on both sides. We can claim for neither, as a group, perfection. We know that many of the labor leaders are actuated by impartial and humanitarian impulses when they seek negro members, and we know the struggles that some of them have made, with considerable success, to break down the barriers against negro participation. We likewise are familiar with individual employers whose attitude toward negroes is beyond question and we have known of others to lend their influence to extend the utilization of negroes in trades and industries to shops of fellow employers.

The question must be decided upon broader grounds than race. It must yield to the test of humanity and justice. Collective bargaining has brought about reform. Workers lives are safer, the span of life has lengthened, laboring classes are more and more acquiring savings and comforts, recreation, a necessary stimulant to health, is assured through shorter working hours and child labor has decreased--all of which the labor movement, through many years of ceaseless struggle, has impelled. One-eighth of the workers of the country are negro men and women. There can be no attainment of labor's goal as long as one-eighth of the workers, both those that are in and those that are out of the unions, are disgruntled or lukewarm. The good health of any nation can be affected by the poor health of one-eighth of its workers and a relatively small proportion of this one-eighth working for smaller wages than white workers, can endanger the welfare of all the union men in all the trade associations of the country. There are 5,000,000 negro workers, North and South, of whom not more than one per cent, or 50,000 are organized.

It is inconceivable therefore that union officials would wish to ignore colored workers. In justice to their own interest they cannot do so, and those recalcitrant nationals and internationals must see the folly of their position or force the entire American Federation of Labor to pay the penalty for their short-sightedness. The negro worker must make terms with organized labor, though it is easy to see why the "lack of interest," to which labor leaders frequently refer, persists. The hotel bellmen and waiters' strike in 1904 which proved so disastrous to colored men in Chicago, the policy of discrimination practiced by a few, yet important nationals, and the refusal of white unionists to work on the same jobs with their fellow colored unionists explain most of the "lack of interest" of the colored workers in organized labor. But the growing favor of the closed shop agreements with employers will force negroes out of work unless they are a part of these agreements. To be a boot and shoe maker in New England, a worker in a large clothing manufacturing establishment in Chicago or New York, a miner of anthracite or bituminous coal, a building tradesman, one is almost compelled to be a union man. Employers must recognize, even those who object to collective bargaining, that the only wise policy for negro workers to pursue, is to affiliate with those trades that are organized if they expect to work at them. Everytime an agreement is signed between a union organization and an employer, none but union men, as long as they are available, can work in the shop or shops covered by the agreement.

If no negroes belong to the trade union or unions involved in the agreement, then no negroes can hope for employment in the shops affected. And since this form of cooperation between capital and labor is increasing, and strike-breaking--heretofore beneficial to colored workers-- is less popular than in the past, the need for affiliation with organized labor should require no reasoning more impressive than the facts. And who can say that a larger negro union membership might not have a very wholesome spiritual effect upon the whole relationship between capital and labor? The negro's inherent patience and conciliation may provide the spirit of give and take which both sides so frequently stand in need of. Labor organizations are not strike bodies, but conciliatory and cooperative agencies, expressing the will and spirit of their constituents to those who employ them, with the one end in view of harmonizing the relationships between the two. The negro laboring

man and woman, traditionally loyal, will interpret his loyalty to his employer and his union in a way that will make this ideal more nearly a universal reality.

*American Federationist*, 32 (October, 1925): 915-20.

# 11. TEXTILE STRIKERS WELCOME NEGROES TO THEIR RANKS

By Roland A. Gibson

"Three cheers for the Negro workers!" Albert Weisbord, organizer of the United Front Committee of Textile Workers in Passaic, New Jersey, sounded the call. A thousand strikers from the United Piece Dye Works in Lodi responded with a will.

The meeting was held in Castle Park Hall on the Garfield side of the Passaic River, just across from the huge Botany Worsted Mills where the workers have been on strike for over seven weeks. A mile and a half the Lodi strikers had marched to hear their leader speak.

I was on the picket line in Lodi during the noon hour that day, March 10th. It was an inspiration to see two Negroes marching in the front ranks. Several hundred colored workers are employed in the dye works. They are paid 25 cents an hour and the conditions under which they work are miserable.

"Twenty-five cents an hour!" Boo-o-o!" we shouted as we passed the walls of the factory and the line of workers smoking and resting after their morning shift. Occasionally two or three would join the line and the exultation would be immense.

Later, at the meeting, Weisbord made an impassioned plea for solidarity of all nationalities and races to win the strike. One of the Negro brothers sat on the platform. "This is not a strike of American workers," Weisbord declared, "This is not a strike of the foreign-born. This is a strike of all the workers to establish a *working class* union. I said yesterday that I should like to be the first to shake the hand of the first Negro worker who would join our ranks. Well, I am glad that I have had that privilege."

This is a new phenomenon among strike leaders. Most unions bar colored workers and thereby encourage them to become strike-breakers. We can be thankful that a new school of labor leaders is arising which will shatter this tradition of prejudice and pave the way for a united labor movement of all workers, regardless of race and nationality.

*The Messenger*, 8 (April, 1926): 120, 127.

# 12. NEGRO WORKERS AT THE CROSSROADS

By Thomas L. Dabney

What should be the attitude of Negro workers to the trade union Movement? Should they join white labor or support the capitalists? Should they be opportunists and content themselves with the role of scabs and strike-breakers or should they form unions of their own?

These are some of the perplexing problems that confront Negro workers. And there is the great diversity of opinion on these questions. Not only the rank and file, but the leaders of the race, are hopelessly divided as to the action that Negro workers should take: Many Negroes, like Dr. Hubert H. Harrison of New York and Prof. Kelly Miller of Howard University, Washington, D.C., adhere strictly to the philosophy of social solidarity as opposed to class solidarity. Others like Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, editor of the *CRISIS* and

Mr. Charles S. Johnson of OPPORTUNITY, subscribe to a more liberal policy. A few Negroes like A. Philip Randolph are proponents of the theory of the class struggle and are staunch unionists.<sup>127</sup>

Ten years ago the outstanding problem of Negro workers was that of breaking into the trades held exclusively by white workers. Although this is still fighting ground, the advance made by the race during the years since the war has precipitated new problems. So long as Negro workers were confined to the less competing and comparatively unimportant jobs and trades in which trades unions have made little head-way, the question of organization was not paramount.

#### War Brought Changes

Today the situation has changed. The war, with its consequent increase in demand for skilled and unskilled labor, greatly aided the efforts of Negro workers to secure more and better jobs in industry. And Negroes proved to be such good laborers that their permanency in the skilled and semi-skilled trades now seems assured. And the race is making advances along these lines every year. In 1920 between 400,000 and 500,000 Negroes had secured jobs in the industrial cities of the North. Most of these were migrants from the agricultural districts of the South, particularly Mississippi and Louisiana!

The success of Negro workers in industry is attested by the fact that a great many plants retained them, despite the falling off in production since 1922 and 1923. In the latter year there were something like 16,000 Negroes, or 21 per cent of the total number of workers, employed in the steel mills in and around Pittsburgh. Following the war-time peak of production, when the plants began to reduce their labor force, many Negroes were dropped from the pay-rolls the same as the whites, but in several cases they were retained in large numbers. Thus, the A. of M. Byers Company kept their entire force of Negro workers, and the Clark Mills of the Carnegie Steel Company had in 1923 a Negro labor force equal to 42 per cent and in 1924 a force equal to 56 per cent of their total labor supply.

Negro workers have made a decided advance in other industries. In New Jersey, for example, they have become an important factor in the building trades. A large number of them have jobs as hod carriers, brickmasons and carpenters.

The fortunes of Negro workers vary from city to city and to some extent in regard to trade. Even in New Jersey, where such an advance has been made in the building trades, a Negro cannot become a licensed plumber or steam-fitter. In St. Paul, Columbus and other cities--especially the smaller industrial centers--Negroes are greatly opposed by white labor, who fear their competition. In Kansas Negroes cannot secure jobs in plumbing, electricity and printing.

The conflicts in recent years between Negro workers and white workers are symptomatic of the present strained relations between these two groups. The race riots in Chicago in 1919, the outbreaks more recently in Detroit, Carteret and other localities have strong economic implications. They show that white labor is not at all friendly to Negro labor on the job, despite the professed friendliness and interest on the part of certain labor leaders. True enough, Negro workers have made great gains in industry, but these gains have not been made without increases suspicions, enmity and conflicts between the races.

Employers, quick to profit by any unfavorable developments within the working class, have taken advantage of the strained relations between Negro and White workers, and in some cases, no doubt, have abetted the movement among white workers to antagonize Negro workers in certain plants.

#### Barring the Negro

Some trade union leaders have done just as bad if not worse than the capitalists. Certain trade unions have barred Negro workers because of their avowed opposition to the bugbear of social equality.

Last winter the writer sent letters of inquiry to a large number of trade unions regarding their attitude to Negro workers who nominally fall within their jurisdiction. My letter to the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks brought the following reply.



"Our constitution provides that all white persons, male or female . . . shall be eligible to membership."

In reply to my question as to the reason for the organization's opposition to Negroes as members Mr. Mufson wrote: "You can answer . . . yourself. It's social."

Charles S. Johnson, director of the department of research and investigation made an extensive investigation of the relation of various trade unions to Negro workers. Mr. Johnson made his report at the annual conference of the National Urban League last February. According to Mr. Johnson, "While but eight local unions still expressly bar the Negro from membership--there are less than 115 to which he is yet admitted without any lines being drawn." Many unions that do not have constitutional provisions against Negroes as members have other means of barring them.

Some trade union leaders explain that the majority of Negro workers cannot join trade unions because they are not working the organized trades. Others along with the rank and file oppose them in certain plants because they are not organized. The American Federation of Labor puts the issue up to the various crafts and internationals.

Meantime, Negro workers are receiving all sorts of advice and admonition from White and Negro leaders and the capitalists. The latter say that they have no objection to hiring Negro workers. They lay claim to an impersonal interest in the matter; but maintain that White workers are making the objections. On the other hand, some trade union leaders say that Negroes are not organizable--because they do not adhere to the principles of trade unionism and because many are not employed in the organizing trades. And finally there are some Negro leaders who warn Negroes against making common cause with the White trade unionists. Some Negroes, who advise the race against joining the trade union Movement, are men of prominence and influence. Prof. Kelly Miller<sup>128</sup> of Howard University wrote an article for the AMERICAN MERCURY for October, 1925, in which he said: "Logic aligns the Negro with labor, but good sense arrays him with capital." A goodly number of Negro editors do not believe that Negro workers should support White labor as against the capitalists. Certain Negro organizations have advised Negro workers against connecting themselves with trade unions or any radical organization or Movement. Typical of these is the Improved Protective Order of Elks of the World. This Negro fraternity passed the following resolution at its convention in Richmond, Virginia in August 1925:

Whereas, it is clear to those of us who have studied the bad results of other like movements where those of our race-group lose positions through union agitators and strike leaders, that unionism is calculated to do our people all sorts of harm and injure them with the employing class in America; therefore be it

Resolved, that we recommend that the methods used by the great industrial organizations of the country in relation to employee representation plans be used as a pattern to form organizations of workers within our group, wherein the interests of both employer and employee will be presented, and be it further

Resolved, that it be the sense of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World in Annual Convention assembled to discourage Bolshevism, Sovietism, Communism and the like within the race; and be it still further

Resolved, that it be the continued policy of our people everywhere to live up with best class of American citizenship, which in the last analysis all over our great country constitute the large employers of labor. And we emphasize the value to our race group of standing squarely back of capital in this country, to the end that we may continue the economic development set in motion during the last five years. And finally, be it

Resolved that it be the policy of the leaders in the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, in their efforts to husband, strengthen and further the industrial destinies of our people, that we discourage and discredit all forms of unionism and economic radicalism as presented to us by white labor agitators, and their tools, and that we pursue only those policies which will hasten the day of brotherly love amongst men of every race and color and creed and nationality to the point where we can all of us sincerely sing, "My Country, 'Tis of Thee."

Another warning to Negro workers was sent out some months ago by the Allied Economic Alliance. This warning reads:

"The Voice of Danger!"

Steel, iron, coal and other cardinal necessities for modern life must be produced and these great industries have been opened up to you in spite of the labor unions that seek to bar you and shut the door of opportunity in your face. Unions have barred you from most of the building trades and if the great industries had not opened up you would have been forced to hang your head and turn your face to the land of quiet and oppression.

You have been able to thrive in the great industrial and railroad centers of the North and unskilled and untrained men have been able to look up to a bright horizon of life. You have caught the spirit of progress and you are buying your own homes, developing your own business and educating your children. The wealth of America gave you the chance.

Should you now listen to the voice that demoralized Russia and brought starvation to millions of men, you will defeat your own purposes. Sit tight in the saddle and you will eventually work out your own destiny. The world is watching and should you prove ungrateful to those faithful few who broke the shackles of peonage and serfdom; you will be unwise.

Ten thousand of you are now earning livelihoods from the great arteries of traffic and travel--the railroads. Ten thousand of you are getting closer and closer to the heart of humanity because of your faithful service and intimate contact. The railroads and the common carriers have given you a new perspective on life. Do not jeopardize your position, nor your strategic opportunity. The future is rosy for you if you are level-headed.

The voice of the labor union is the voice of danger, betrayal and destruction. Do not heed it. Much is in store for you, either prosperity and happiness or trouble and disaster.

Such statements as the foregoing are partially true--true enough to keep Negro workers in a state of indecision and quandary. Thus Negroes blunder along with no clear-cut policy in any direction, hoping all the while that labor will change its policy of opposition and indifference.

Many of the leaders and members of trade unions do not understand the psychology of Negro workers with respect to the Labor Movement. In principle and theory Negro workers to a considerable extent favor trade unionism. The philosophy of the Labor Movement has a tremendous appeal for them; but they have learned by bitter experience that the theory of trade unions is one thing and their practice is another. There are cases where Negro trade union members were loyal and faithful to the organization, going out on strikes and supporting the campaigns for higher wages and better working conditions only to lose their jobs when the settlement was made with the employers.

OPPORTUNITY for February last published the following item relative to the action of a certain union towards its Negro members:

"During the strike of April, 1924, the union went around and scouted all of the colored--by ruse to join the union, they collected \$3.00 for an application to join and after the strike were kicked out."

This is the situation which White labor must understand and face. It is not a question of Negro workers preferring a revival church meeting, as Hilmar Raushenbush intimated last year in a series of lectures on the problems of the coal industry at Brookwood Labor College; but it is largely one of whether Negroes can depend on the professed friendship and interest of White workers in the face of their narrow, selfish and discriminatory practices.<sup>129</sup>

### 200,000 in Unions

That Negro workers are amenable to the philosophy of trade unionism is attested by the fact that more than 200,000 Negroes belong to trade unions. The majority of them are in the trades in which Negroes have a monopoly or are engaged in large numbers such as railway workers, longshoremen, hod carriers and building laborers.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organized August 25, 1925, has had a marvelous success. Something like 7,000 of the 10,000 Negroes employed on railroads as porters have joined the Brotherhood. The writer has attended several of their public meetings in New York and can say from experience that

speakers seldom meet such enthusiastic and responsive audiences as were present at these meetings of the porters.

The Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees has members on twelve railroads and include under its jurisdiction 4,000 men--3,00 of whom are members of the Brotherhood. In Norfolk, Virginia and vicinity above 1,900 Negro longshoremen belong to the International Longshoremen's Association. There are approximately 25,000 Negroes in the International Hod Carriers' Building and Common Laborers' Union of America.

Because of the attitude of the conservative element in the American Federation of Labor, Negro workers seem to be skeptical of the Movement. Taking advantage of this situation the more radical groups are the most vigilant and energetic.

With such an outlook before them, what should Negro workers do? Should they remain loyal to Capital or join Labor despite the past and present attitude of White labor? Should Negro workers continue their policy of conservatism or accept the proffered offers of the radicals? What Negroes are likely to do is of more interest than what the reclused learned sage thinks they should do.

*Labor Age*, 16 (February, 1927): 8-10.

### 13. THE DECLINE OF THE NEGRO STRIKEBREAKER

By Ira De A. Reid

The American labor movement has long regarded the threat of Negro strikebreakers as one of the banes of its existence. For years there was a most unhealthy attitude on the part of organized labor toward this powerful, docile, unskilled labor force that was controlled by only such economic factors as were the antithesis of labor principles. Finchers Trades Review of July 1863 tells of a riot at Buffalo, N.Y. when the bosses attempted to replace the white longshoremen with black workers. As a result of this escapade, two black men were drowned, one killed, and twelve seriously beaten. It was at this time that the opposition to the Negroes in unskilled labor was most bitter. It caused strong complaints from the whites who said that the Negroes cheated them out of all the easiest ways of making a living and this opposition led to riots and mass-acres of colores workmen.

The Negro worker has been, in the main, an opportunist. When many unions closed their doors on him, when employers refused to hire him in normal times, he found the doors in industrial freedom shut in his face. Though supply and demand governed the normal labor group, the Negro found injected into his employment this quasi-economic law of supply and demand plus that of race. Thus, when white workers sought greater freedom and justice in their employment and used the strike method, the Negro was the most available group and the group most mentally prepared to receive the preferred opportunity. It was his chance to have organized labor recognize him as a more potent factor in its existence.

#### Some Prime Factors

Let us glance at some of the outstanding situations affecting the Negro and strikes:

1. A strikebreaker is a person who is hired or who volunteers to take the place of a worker on strike. Owing to the difficulty of securing such persons in the immediate vicinity of a strike they are often imported from other states or neighboring regions. The Federal Commission on Industrial Relations in a staff report stated that practically without exception, either that the strikebreaker is not a genuine workingman but is a professional who merely fills the place of the worker and is unable to do steady work, or, if he is a bona fide worker, that he is ignorant of conditions, and compelled to work in duress.

2. The period of the World War noted in practically every country for the extraordinary increase in strikes. This period ran concurrent with the

increase in Negro migration from the South. Between the years 1916 and 1921 there was at least 19,970 strikes.

3. The Stockyard Strike, 1904, in Chicago was broken by the use of Negroes. This was the opening wedge for the admittance to the Union of the large number of Negroes which followed. No organization thereafter could hope to amount to anything in the yards, unless it took in Negroes.

4. Although the interest that employers in securing Negroes has not always been merely the granting of an opportunity for work where Negroes have entered as strikebreakers, they have usually remained. This recent entrance into industry has made him for the first time, a considerable factor, and he feels that the unions recognizing his importance to the accomplishment of union aims are making appeals to him for membership, not out of a spirit of brotherhood, but merely to advance their purposes.

#### Cooperation On Competition

5. In the year 1921 at an industrial convention of Negro organizations controlling the employment of thousands of Negro workers, it was decided that Negroes would not be sent as strikebreakers to places where the striking unions accepted Negroes, and that they would advise Negroes to join the unions wherever possible; but, that where Negroes are offered positions by employers in trades where Negroes are excluded from the unions, they would not be advised to forego the opportunity.

6. The Negro minister is still the leader among the people. Until recently Negro ministers knew very little about unionism except that employers are opposed to it. This was enough to influence Negro ministers to urge Negro workers to stay out of unions and thus demonstrate their loyalty to the employer who had given them a chance in industry.

7. The decline of some Negro leaders, who were willing to oppose unions for certain considerations given them by employers, public pressure from the Negro population having become too strong.

8. During the strike feeling runs high, and the word "strikebreaker" or "scab" carries with it a decided stigma among the strikers. White workers ordinarily did not try to understand why the Negro acts as he does. They do not reason that the Negro is often loyal to the employer because he feels that the employer has opened to him industrial opportunities which means better living conditions for himself and family. White workers feel that Negroes who serve as strikebreakers are helping to earn for their race the stigma of being a scab.

#### The Chicago Commission's Proposals

9. Recommendations of the Chicago Commission on Industrial Relations:

(a) That qualified Negro workers desiring membership in labor organizations, join unions that admit both races equally, instead of organizing separate Negro labor unions; (b) That it is an injustice and a cause of racial antagonism for employers who having hired Negroes as strikebreakers, discharge them when the strike is settled to make places for former white employees; (c) That the practice of self-seeking agitators, whether Negro or White, who use race sentiment to establish separate unions in trades where existing unions admit Negroes to equal membership with whites, is condemned.

10. The International Union of America in 1878 stated that race was being arrayed against race, and that the competition was retarding the progress of all workmen.

11. In January 1856, the Stevedores of New York engaged in a strike for higher wages, and Negroes were used in their places. Today, this occupation offers a large opportunity for Negro workers, and they are members of unions.

12. Between 1882 and 1900 there were fifty strikes against Negro labor listed by the Department of Labor of which 11 were successful and 39 failed. Twenty-three of these were against the employment of Negro male workers; 10 were to secure the discharge of Negro workers; 7 were opposed to working with Negroes; and 1 was against the employment of a Negro foreman.

13. In 1880 a strike among the miners of Pennsylvania led to the importation of Negro workers. Such conditions caused greater activity in the organization of Negro labor.

## Reasons For The Decline

The Negro strikebreakers may be said to be on the decline for the following reasons: (a) Because of the increase of industrial opportunities for Negro workers, (b) The exposition of militant industrialism by supporters in the Negro group; (c) A more serious consideration of the economic basis of life through its publications; (d) A more aggressive assault upon the stronghold of American organized labor by Negro leaders and organizations; (e) Organization of Negro labor independent of white labor; (f) Use of Negro organizers.

At the same time the use of Negro strikebreakers will continue for the following reasons: (a) Because of the rank indifference of the American Federation of Labor and its subordinate bodies to the problem, despite their many resolutions and platitudes; (b) Because of the refusal by international organizations and others to admit members under charters of these internationals; (c) Unfair attitudes on the part of unions after Negroes become members; (d) Failure of the American Labor Movement to seek to inform and educate Negro labor; (e) Failure to encourage organization of the Negro group.

If Negroes perform, as has been asserted, one-seventh of the labor in the United States, labor organizations of America can never be effective until the great mass of Negro workers is organized. The complaint could not be made continually that the Negro does not take to the unions, and that he is not a union man. No workingman who finds it to his interest to remain a non-union man will ever give up the privilege. Membership in a union should offer some advantage to the Negro. To every white workingman the Union offers superior advantages. When union men strike, non-union men have large opportunity. These instances have been the occasion upon which Negro labor has entered openings which were hitherto closed to it. The Steel Strike of 1919-1920, the Coal Strike of 1922--both of these led to the realization that Negro workers should be organized. The migration with the resulting transfer of Negroes from agriculture to industry has increased the necessity for action, and not finely declarations by organized labor.

## Industrial Opportunity Opening Up

The transition to an industrial activity and an economic position which will bring the Negro group to a place comparable with other race groups in America has not been completed. It is a continuous process at the present time in Negro life. Thousands of Negroes are coming into urban centers, and industrial opportunities are open to them, but they are often unprepared for them, since their former contacts have been in rural communities and in agriculture. The education of the Negro worker looms up as one of the large problems of the present and the future. The tide of prejudice has been continuing where colored and white workmen meet and an increasing spirit of cooperation must be developed, so that each group may realize that the successful solution of the Labor problem from the point of view of the worker lies largely in the worker's cooperation without regard to race or sex. The use of the Negro as a strikebreaker, and his increasing employment shows the great danger to Labor from the lack of organization. The variations often made in wage agreements between the races likewise argues for the unionization of Negro Labor. The tradition of the absolute racial inferiority of the Negro should be examined by all workers, and an open-minded attitude should be adopted. Negro business men should lend their efforts toward the building of enterprises which will give employment to Negro workers and both in the quality of the product as well as in labor itself. Negro labor would demonstrate its efficiency. Capitalism through human bondage, a debasing wage slavery, and a restricted occupational life has made possible and the continual exploitation of its black workers, who struggle not only against the usual obstacles of the average American workingman but also against the special handicaps of race and color. One need not wear the role of historian and essay the role of prophet to realize that the future of Negro labor would be immeasurably advanced by education, cooperation, organization, and racial self-help. The history of the past economic development presages a greater advance in the immediate future. These facts present the view at the threshold of a closed door which is now slowly being pushed open by Negro labor--the door to larger industrial opportunity.

*New Leader*, April 21, 1928.

## 14. NEGRO WORKERS AND THE UNIONS

By Charles S. Johnson

For several years after the great exodus of Negroes from southern agriculture to northern industry began, no one knew how many Negro workers had been taken in the unions, or what the status of colored workers was in relation to organized labor. This confusion prompted a study of Negro workers and the unions, which is still in progress, sponsored by the American Fund for Public Service through a grant to the National Urban League. What I set down here is merely a preliminary report.

Peculiar difficulties enter into the Negro situation. Where relations are most friendly the disposition has been to disregard race and color, classing colored workers as "Americans". This policy, the final objective of those who insist upon full inclusion of Negroes in labor unions, makes it hard to gauge the present degree of this inclusion. The United Mine Workers, with 500,000 members, the United Garment Workers and, to a lesser degree, the International Brotherhood of Longshoremens, the Hod Carriers and Building Common Laborers are cases in point. The survey so far includes the locals of forty-eight national and international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor with a combined membership of 1,527,248; Negro membership in locals in Chicago, New York, Detroit and Washington, D.C., and in the states of New Jersey, Delaware, Minnesota, Idaho, Connecticut, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Ohio; the mine workers of West Virginia and Pennsylvania, organized under the United Mine Workers Union, which has a membership of 500,000 not included in the total above; the three large independent Negro unions, the Railway Men's Independent Benevolent Association, the Dining Car Men's Association, and the new Pullman porters' organization.

The total Negro membership in these various organizations is 65,492. This number, while derived from several sources, has been carefully checked and should be regarded as a minimum figure. The largest numbers of Negroes are members of the Longshoremens' Union, with about 15,000; the Hod Carriers and Building Laborers, 8,000; the musicians, 3,000; the garment trades, about 6,000; the Hotel and Restaurant Employees, 1,000.

Questions raised today concerning Negro workers and trade unions are much the same as those that arose when emancipation of the slaves made Negroes a sudden menace to free labor. The Knights of Labor, predecessor of the American Federation of Labor, received Negro workers more cordially than they are now received. The liberal policy was prompted as much by fear as by fellow-feeling. The debate on the admission of Negroes before the historic Baltimore congress, just after emancipation, brought out the statement that "Negroes will take possession of the shops if we have not taken possession of the Negroes."

The menace of Negro workers was for several decades lessened by foreign immigration in the North and by the gradual crowding out of skilled Negro workers in the South.

The first labor organizations were in the skilled crafts, and many of these began as lodges which excluded Negroes on the broad principle of social inequality. Also, early labor organizing was done in sections of the country in which there were few skilled Negro workers and in lines of work in which Negroes were not engaged. The War checked immigration and created a scarcity of labor. At the same time it brought about a tremendous shift in the Negro population from the South to industrial areas of the North.

At the Atlantic City convention, nearly fifty of the 110 unions affiliated with the A.F. of L., in response to the urging of the Executive Council, reported that they raised no barrier against Negro workers. The convention authorized the formation of federated locals of colored workers refused membership in any international. Although only eight of the member organizations of the A.F. of L. now expressly bar Negro members, their status has not changed greatly in fields from which they were originally excluded. The recent policy of the A.F. of L., in favor of the unionization of Negroes, has been a coldly logical one, without the force of general agreement or official power behind it.

In our study, we have found eight types of union relations between white and Negro workers.

Eleven international unions exclude Negroes by constitutional provision or ritual. This group, which includes the railway unions, the boiler makers,

the machinists and the commercial telegraphers, has a total membership of 436,200 and controls a field in which a minimum of 43,858 Negroes are employed.

There is little difference between this forthright exclusion and the policy of a second group which, having nothing in its constitution against Negro membership, yet discourages it and succeeds in keeping the numbers small. Outstanding among such unions are the electrical workers, with 142,000 members, practically none of them from among the 1,343 Negro electricians; the sheet metal workers, with 25,000 and no known Negroes; the Plasterers Union with less than 100 Negroes among its 30,000 members in a trade having some 6,000 colored workers; the plumbers and steam fitters with 35,000 members, and a long history of successful maneuvering to avoid Negro membership, though there are 3,600 Negro workers in the trade.

A third group of unions admits but does not encourage Negro membership. These include the carpenters, with 340,000 members and only 592 Negroes. The unions are not wholly responsible for the racial situation in this class of labor organization. When skilled Negro workers in independent crafts outside factories place themselves under union jurisdiction and cease bargaining individually, all other white workers are given preference over them both by employers and officials who have the assignment of jobs. If the Negro works for other than union rates, in order to work at all, he is subject to a fine or suspension. In cities where these unions are in control, it is extremely difficult for Negro workers to gain admittance.

A fourth group includes unions like the musicians, hotel and restaurant employees, journeymen barbers, United Textile workers, cooks and waiters, and the American Federation of Teachers, which admit Negroes freely but only to separate unions. The most successful of these are the musicians, who find an advantage in separate organization, and the regulation in certain locals making the Negro union subservient to the rules of the white local does not seem to interfere with the freedom of Negro members.

A fifth type of regulation admits Negroes freely to mixed or separate unions. In these are included the largest Negro membership, the longshoremen, hod carriers and common building laborers, and tunnel workers. These are not skilled trades, or trades requiring apprenticeship, and they are lines of work in which Negroes are freely employed.

The United Mine Workers and the garment workers admit Negroes only to mixed unions. In the first, discrimination among members and locals is discouraged with the threat of a fine. In the second, because the clothing industry centers about New York and Chicago and is largely Jewish and foreign-born in membership, racial sentiment against Negroes is not strong.

Among the independent Negro unions are the Railroad Men's Independent and Benevolent Association, a protest union composed of railroad men barred from the regular craft unions; the dining-car men's association; and the new Pullman porters' organization controlled by white men. Practically all dining-car men are Negroes and there is no question of competition. The policy of the Pullman porter is still unsettled.

Finally, there is a group of unions organized in fields where few Negroes are definitely barred. This includes Pullman conductors, railway engineers, pattern makers, operative potters, leather workers and others. Here Negroes suffer from lack of skill and the lack of opportunity to gain skill because of restrictions imposed by employers who will not hire them and union members who will neither instruct nor work with them.

Where the trade unions have been open to them, Negroes have entered as freely as white workers. In Chicago, the proportion of Negro men in labor organizations is more than twice their proportion to the total population. This, of course, is partly because there is relatively a larger proportion of Negroes in industry. But in considering whether Negroes can be organized as easily as white workers, it must also be borne in mind that the great mass of Negro workers are employed in fields which are not yet unionized. For all classes, agricultural and domestic workers (unorganized lines) constitutes 34.5 per cent of the working population; for the Negroes, 67.3. Again, the greatest degree of organization is to be found in the North, and four-fifths of the Negroes live in the South. The skilled trades are those most thoroughly organized, but three-fourths of the Negroes are unskilled.

One reason for the hostility of white to Negro workers is the fear of them as strike breakers. The fear is warranted, for not only is there a menace to union objectives in the availability of Negro workers, but it has so happened

that many of the greatest advances which Negroes have made in industry, many of their first opportunities, are due to strikes and their part in breaking them. They were used to break the stockyard strike, and they have been employed there ever since; they were largely responsible for the failure of the steel strike, and they now make up 10 per cent of steel mill workers; they were used in the great railroad strike of 1922, and about 700 Negroes, mostly skilled, are still employed by one system alone. They are being used at present in the anthracite coal strike in Pennsylvania and in the strike of bakers and confectionary workers in Chicago. The list could be continued indefinitely.

Precisely the opposite situation has occurred when Negroes have been inside the unions. In the West Virginia coal strike of 1922 there was the peculiar situation of the mine owners putting their faith in Negro recruits and the miner's union depending on the stamina of its Negro membership to hold its position. As longshoremen they have stayed with their organization in times of conflict, in spite of the fact that Negro strike breakers were used against them. Union officials agree that as union men, Negroes are as faithful in their obligations as are white members.

The really important fact is that Negro workers, a million strong in the North, with other labor supplies limited, are having their first real contact with skill. They are increasingly eligible for admission to the old crafts which are still disposed to think of them as usurpers, taking white men's jobs. The gaps being made in skilled lines by promotion, retirement and death cannot be filled entirely by native white workers or the reduced immigration. It is the pressure of this situation, taut and vital, that has promoted this study, the final results of which may enable Negroes, employers and unions to take the next step with their eyes open.

*The Survey*, 60 (April 15, 1928): 113-15.

15. SHALL THE NEGRO WORKER TURN TO LABOR OR TO CAPITAL?

By Will Herberg

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*The Crisis*, 40 (July, 1931): 227-28.

16. WHITES OUST NEGRO UNDER N.R.A. IN SOUTH

Displace Colored Workers in Many Lines Due to Higher Wages

NEW PROBLEM WEIGHED

Wage Differential Suggested, but Dr. Moton Clings to Principle of Parity

By Julian Harris

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*New York Times*, August 27, 1933.

17. WHITE TEXTILE WORKERS OF SOUTH LEARNING TO  
UNITE WITH NEGRO BROTHERS IN STRUGGLE

Sellouts of U.T.W. Officials Also Teach Mill  
Workers Need for Rank and File Union

By a Textile Worker Correspondent

OLINVILLE, VA.--I am a textile worker who has been sold out several times by the United Textile Workers officials. Will say I have woke up and will do all I can to show up the leaders of the United Textile Workers Union and the A.F. of L., for they are a lot of no-good leaders. They will tell the workers anything to keep them in slavery.

Why don't the bosses care if you join the U.T.W. union? Because if they can fool the workers into their sell-out unions they can control them.

Believe me, the white workers and the colored workers have done woke up. They have learnt if they ever get out of slavery they will have to fight together like brother union members. The boss class for all these years have always made the white worker hate the colored worker and therefore the colored worker was scared to say anything to the white worker. But that is the thing of the past, for the white and the colored worker have found out that they will have to fight together before either one gets up.

Now these so-called U.T.W. leaders said they could call out 300,000 textile workers on strike, but when the time came they called it all off.

Now workers think it over and see if you can find any way to get away from slavery without forming a union. There is no other way except to join a union which is run by the workers not the bosses.

Now, white worker, tell the colored worker that you and he have got to pull together if you ever get out of slavery. The colored worker is waiting for you to tell him and believe me you don't have to be afraid of him for he knows he can only get out of slavery with the help of the white worker. And the best way to get together is through the National Textile Workers Union.

So workers think back what Gorman, the U.T.W. vice-president, said in Danville, Va., back in 1931 and 1932. He said Mr. West was a good friend to him. He also said Mr. West would have a good job with the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills some time. Now Gorman knew what he was talking about, for Mr. West is now president of the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills. A labor leader said a company man was a friend of his.<sup>132</sup>

*Daily Worker*, July 4, 1934.

18. PETER A. CARMICHAEL TO H. L. KERWIN, MARCH 26, 1935

Redmont Hotel  
Birmingham, Alabama

Mr. H. L. Kerwin  
Director of Conciliation  
Department of Labor  
Washington, D.C.

BIRMINGHAM LAUNDRIES

Dear Mr. Kerwin:

It looks like a strike in the laundries of Birmingham. The workers have held off for two or three weeks, on the chance that the laundry operators would come to reason, but their patience is exhausted and the bosses show no sign of a break. Consequently the workers are having a general meeting tomorrow night, when they intend to take a strike vote. The sentiment among them in favor of a strike is overwhelming.

The workers, through their three unions (inside white workers, inside Negro workers, and route men), are asking recognition of the unions, a closed

shop, and small wage increases. They are willing to bargain and make concessions on some points. The laundry operators absolutely refuse to recognize the unions or to meet their committees or to sign anything--with the exception of two smaller ones, which are already signed up and may be the means of breaking the backbone of the hold-outs in case of a strike.

Five or six of the largest laundries dominate the business, and they appear to have banded together with the intent of resisting and perhaps destroying the unions. The president of one of the strongest has told me he wanted a fight, and the president of another big place tells a local intermediary he is itching for a strike. On the other hand, the unions have postponed action for weeks, hoping negotiations would bring a settlement. They presented proposed contracts to the operators and got no response whatever from any but the one I mention above as having already signed up. These latter signed after a little negotiating, one of them granting a slight raise of wages, a closed shop, and a check-off, and the other granting the check-off.

The main problem has been getting the operators to meet the contract committee of the union, or any committee. It has not been possible for me even to get the operators together--and they flatly refuse individually to meet the committee. With the help of Mr. Ike Robinson a state representative of the American Federation of Labor, I got the cooperation of Mr. Victor Wertheimer, president of the now disbanded Birmingham Laundry Owners Association. Mr. Wertheimer agreed to canvass his associates in the business and try to persuade them to hold a meeting and consider dealing with the unions. Though he has been at this for more than a week, as his time permitted, he tells me daily he is making practically no progress, and doubts that he will. A disinterested third party, Mr. Ira F. Randall, the head of a credit association here who has done considerable organization work and who has taken an interest in the laundry dispute, voluntarily came into the picture and attempted to induce the operators to meet the workers. After talking with two of them he informed me he thought it useless. I had previously talked with all the laundry operators, attempting to persuade them to see the workers, or even to meet and consider the workers' proposals, without receiving the workers themselves. They refused this and informed me that their minds were already made up. They also let me know that they did not welcome any Government intervention. This was due to what they called the injustice of a settlement made by the Atlanta Regional Labor Board a year ago, after a strike in the laundries here last March. They abused the Board, in their talks with me, and made statements about it which I have learned from its Director, Mr. Frank E. Coffee, to be absolutely false. Mr. Coffee remarks about them as follows in a letter I have received from him:

"I don't think I have ever had any contact with a group that compares with the Birmingham laundry operators. From the very beginning they have acted more like a bunch of children than business men. No two of them ever agree on anything."

Mr. Coffee also sends me a copy of a letter from one of the principal operators, written after the Atlanta Board made the settlement a year ago, in which that operator praises the settlement and the Board. This worthy, I may say, is one of the chief grippers now--the one who says he wants a fight.

I first called on the laundry owners with Mr. John G. Towles, president of the Birmingham Dyers and Cleaners Association. Mr. Towles wanted their cooperation, since all of them either do dry cleaning or else accept it and let it out to other concerns. The chief ones showed no wish to cooperate, and in one or two instances they indicated they wanted to fight the unions. Presently the dry cleaners arrived at a settlement with their workers, which I have previously reported. I enclose herewith a copy of the contract which their association has signed with the unions. After this, I visited all the laundry operators, trying to get them to meet the union committee or even to meet with one another, but they declined. In the mean time I appealed to the unions to hold off, on the chance that negotiations would accomplish something. They did this; in fact they have all along acted, in my judgment, with sanity and even with conservatism. Then I obtained the cooperation of the Mr. Wertheimer mentioned before, and after this the Mr. Randall made efforts too. I am making a last try with the operators, more as a formality than anything else, since I have no reason to think they will budge. And tomorrow night the laundry workers are going to vote on striking.

In my opinion a strike is the only thing that will bring the troubles here to an issue. And in any case it seems unavoidable now. I think, however, that because two laundries are signed up and will operate during whatever strike there may be, and also because one or two others will possibly sign, it will be possible to bring the operators to terms reasonably soon after the strike comes off.

There are thirteen laundries involved in the dispute, including one of the two that have signed up. These thirteen went before the Atlanta Board at the time of the strike a year ago. The decision, or "Award," made then, terminated on March 15, 1935, but contained a provision that a period of 30 days after that date would be allowed for negotiating an agreement for the ensuing year. About 1,000 workers are directly involved. The laundry workers gave notice to the operators, January 14, 1935, that they wanted to renew the Atlanta agreement, with a few changes. The operators made no response. It is over this renewal proposal, and also over the changes the unions want, that the present dispute has arisen. The changes are the closed shop, check-off, and wage increase I have mentioned previously.

Yours respectfully,

Peter A. Carmichael  
Commissioner of Conciliation  
[U.S. Department of Labor]

Philip Taft Papers, Public Library Archives, Birmingham, Alabama.

19. PETER A. CARMICHAEL TO H. L. KERWIN, APRIL 29, 1935

653 Preston Place  
Charlottesville, Va.

Mr. H. L. Kerwin  
Director of Conciliation  
Department of Labor  
Washington, D.C.

BIRMINGHAM LAUNDRIES

Dear Mr. Kerwin:

I have returned to my home after failing to accomplish an adjustment of the labor troubles in the laundry industry of Birmingham, Alabama. It was very evident that nothing I could do would bring the laundry proprietors and their employees together in a peaceable settlement, and it was also evident that the employees had lost their strike, since the laundries were pretty well filled with new workers. Furthermore, a number of attempts at mediation by Birmingham citizens and officers had failed. It seemed useless to me to remain there any longer, and so I departed for home, having no other assignments.

In previous reports I have told you of attempts by Birmingham people to reconcile the two sides. I should like to add now that City Commissioner Lewey Robinson called on the laundry owners to meet the contract committee of the laundry unions, but they refused. City Commissioner W. O. Downs a little after this volunteered his services as a mediator, but the laundry owners would not respond. The city Chief of Police put some pressure on the owners to settle the trouble and so free his officers from policing their places, but this also failed to move them. I obtained concessions from the unions' contract committee, in respect to wage increases and a check-off, which they were asking, and drew from the committee an authorization for Commissioner Downs to present these concessions to the owners, but the latter still remained

unresponsive. I tried to induce the Chamber of Commerce to use its unfluence on the owners for a settlement, but it was unwilling to become involved in that way. I proposed local arbitration, but the laundrymen refused that too. They were absolutely set on fighting the matter out with the unions, and the leading ones openly said so. They were also hostile to Government incercession, on the ground that they had submitted similar difficulties to the Atlanta Regional Labor Board a year before, for arbitration, and had gotten the short end of the deal (though this complaint was unjustified on the record and was in fact belied by a letter from the largest laundry owner in Birmingham, who praised the Atlanta Board's ruling very highly).

Not all of the proprietors held out in that way. I had meetings with five of them and the unions' contract committee. The result was a signed contract, providing for a closed shop, check-off, and higher wages, in four of the cases, I have little doubt that if the other laundry owners, operating nine plants, had met with the committee and made a reasonable effort to settle, the whole affair could have been adjusted. That was the case with the dry cleaners of Birmingham, who freely met the same contract committee, chosen to represent both laundry and dry-cleaning workers, and finally came to an agreement signed by every member of the Birmingham Dyers and Cleaners Association, which has now forty members.

The laundry business in Birmingham has been hard pressed for some time, on account of the severe depression in that city and also, I learned, on account of the fact that the laundry facilities are beyond the city's requirements normally. The spread of the union movement, which has been great in that vicinity within the past two years, looked to the laundry owners like a new peril to their business. Last year it led, with the tactics of the owners themselves, to a general laundry strike there and to the subsequent decision of the Atlanta Regional Labor Board. All this made the stronger laundrymen thoroughly determined to check the rise of the unions. Nothing outside of force could have turned them from that determination, I feel certain. The principal laundry owner of Birmingham told me the first time I visited him that he wanted a fight with the unions, and others who had banded together with him told me virtually the same thing. It became clearer and clearer that the one issue was union recognition. And since even to meet the union committee would constitute a certain union recognition on the part of the proprietors, they resolved not to meet it. They have stuck to their resolution, and have apparently whipped the unions.

I was asked by union men in other lines, while in Birmingham, to take up other cases. Two of these involved clay-manufacturing plants, and a third involved a small dairy. I believe the negotiations which followed, in a rather informal way since I had not been officially assigned to these cases, may lead to a peaceable adjustment in one of the cases, and possibly in two.

In case you do not assign me to another case shortly, I expect to visit Washington in a day or two to talk over with you the propriety of my taking up cases which you have not assigned to me. The Birmingham area is full of such cases, and I was requested to take up quite a number of them, by labor leaders.

Respectfully yours,

Peter A. Carmichael  
Commissioner of Conciliation  
[U.S. Department of Labor]

Philip Taft Papers, Public Library Archives, Birmingham, Alabama.



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*The Crisis*, 42 (June, 1935): 183.

21. TRADE UNIONISM--OUR ONLY HOPE

By Frank R. Crosswaith

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*The Crisis*, 42 (June, 1935): 166-67, 187.

### THREE NEGRO LABOR COMMITTEES

#### 22. THE TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR ORGANIZING NEGROES

By Frank W. Crosswaith<sup>135</sup>

*Executive Secretary, Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers*

Onward sweeps the industrial tide of America carrying in its resistless rush, many of the accumulated beliefs and attitudes long held by a large portion of organized labor in regard to the Negro worker. This sweeping tide is also away the myth that this is a classless country in which every man has a chance to become a bank president, an oil magnate, a coal baron, a landlord, or a railroad czar.

Having been, upon his landing in America, soldered as it were to the soil for over 250 years, while around and about him was growing up the industrial system which has now spread throughout the length and breadth of the land, the Negro worker was for many years looked upon by organized labor as being outside the pale of its concern.

The general opinion was that he--the Negro--was definitely and for all time to do no more than hew wood and draw water, consequently, no worthwhile efforts were made to reach him with the message of unionism, because, the early trade unionists held the common belief that, due to certain physiological and psychological distinctions the Negro would never be able mentally to "fit in" to the growing and complicated industrial system; that the natural habitat of the Negro, in chattel slavery or out of it, was the farm. Be that as it may, it is now a fact that with ever increasing rapidity the Negro is being introduced into industry both as a skilled and unskilled worker and as a result of this fact, two other facts stand out as clear as a noon-day sun.

1. In almost every important strike lost by organized labor within the last fifteen or twenty years, the Negro worker has played a conspicuous role in its outcome and he is destined to play a still more important role in the future. In the collapse of the workers fight in the great steel strike of 1918, the Negro strike breaker was very much in evidence; in the stockyard fiasco of 1922 the unorganized Negro worker was found on the side of the great packing interest; in the railroad strike of 1920 the Negro worker was

on the side of the railroad owners. It is even claimed that Negroes helped to defeat the printers in their "rump strike" two years ago in New York City.

2. The gradual realization on the part of organized labor that its own existence, its own best interest was at stake and that unless the Negro workers are organized as well as the white workers are, the strikes won by union labor in this country would become fewer and fewer with the passing of years; because of these facts we have seen from time to time some feeble efforts made to get Negro workers organized; these efforts have not always brought the desired results, of course there is a reason, which I do not desire here to discuss, but will do so in a future article on "labor and the color line."

Nevertheless, to expect that the accumulated ideas and impressions made upon the minds of the white people of this country through 250 years of chattel slavery, would be suddenly changed by the simple process of a worker joining a labor union, is to expect entirely too much. And so, after white trade unionists, lashed by the whip of self-interest were forced in many instances to admit the Negro worker, we find the left-over ideas and impressions from chattel slavery moulding the unions' attitude toward the Negro worker. For instance, where he was permitted to enter the unions the following practices were perpetrated upon him; first he had to have a special Negro local (of course with white officers in control) in distinct contrast to the white locals, and incidentally the members of the white locals were usually less unemployed than were the members of the Negro locals; where he was taken into a white local, he quickly realized that his main function there was to pay dues; from certain official positions in the union he was barred whether these were elective or appointive, these positions being considered "white men's jobs;" the higher the salary and the greater the privileges attached to these positions the stronger was the conviction that they were "white men's jobs;" the Negro also found in many cases that whenever there were jobs to be had his white brother would invariably get them, while he would be sent to a job only when all the whites were employed; when the "lay-off" period set in the Negro was the first to get that most unwelcome ultimatum; as a result of these experiences the Negro worker reacted by becoming suspicious of all unions and all union organizers.

However, the present stringent immigration laws which cut off the supply of European and other foreign labor, together with the rapid urbanization of the population of the United States resulting in thousands of workers leaving the farms every year for the industrial centers, the farms themselves becoming highly industrialized with the aid of modern farming instruments, are among some of the factors that have forced white labor to search itself and assume some concern about the Negro worker.

About a year ago a group of Negro and white trade unionists and their friends met at the Civic Club for an exchange of ideas on the question of the Negro worker and his relations to organized labor. At this gathering were present justice are well established, such men as Dr. Norman Thomas, Dr. Harry Laidler, Cedric Long, Thomas J. Curtis, Max Danish and such women as Mrs. Gertrude E. McDougald, Mrs. Kenneth Walzer and others too numerous to mention. There were also present some who apparently did not fully understand the question and the principles under discussion and whose attitude seemed rather opposed to organized labor because of the latter's past neglect of the Negro worker, nevertheless, out of that gathering was organized a committee consisting of the following: Thomas J. Curtis, General Manager Compensation Bureau of the Building Trades; Samuel A. Irving, Carpenters Union, Secretary; Frank R. Crosswaith, Union Organizer; Max Danish, Editor of *Justice*, the organ of the I.L.G.W. Union and Mrs. Gertrude E. McDougald, Teachers Union.

Mrs. Walzer was elected chairman of the committee and its consequent success is due in large measure to her industry and her untiring devotion to the task assigned her. After a period of many months spent in ascertaining the attitude of the unions toward the matter, a conference was decided upon. This conference met at Arlington Hall, May 23, 1925; over 25 local and international unions were represented by delegates, many which had shown interest in the matter and signified their intentions to be present were unavoidably kept away.

The principal address was made by Mr. Hugh Frayne, New York representative of the A.F. of L. He spoke in very interesting and sympathetic terms

of the Negro worker, and pledged the full support of the A.F. of L. to whatever constructive effort the Conference would decide upon. Mr. Frayne's enthusiastic address was a true reflection of the general spirit of the delegates who seemed clearly to realize the tremendous size and seriousness of the task facing them. The determination everywhere was that never again must organized labor lose another strike in New York City through the activities of unorganized Negro workers. The Conference voted to create a permanent organization to be known as the "Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers," whereupon Mr. Thomas J. Curtis, President of the International Union of Tunnel Workers and Manager of the Compensation Bureau of the Building Trades was elected Chairman and Treasurer. Mrs. Gertrude E. McDougald, Assistant Principal of Public School No. 89, and representing the Teachers Union, was chosen vice-chairman; Frank R. Crosswaith and A. August Marquis were elected executive secretary and assistant secretary respectively.

An executive committee was also chosen, its membership besides those above named, is as follows: Ernst Bohm, Bookkeepers, Stenographers, and Accountants Union; Ed. Brown, Jr., Elevator Operators and Starters Union; Eugene J. Cohan, Teamsters Union; Samuel A. Irving, Carpenters Union; L. Rosenthal, Laundry Workers International Union; James J. Cunningham, Carpenters Union and Joseph Kesten, International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

Headquarters have now been opened at 2380 7th Avenue, Room 504, and within a short time the organization will begin to make its presence felt in the economic life of the Negro workers of New York City. Too long has it been a truism that the Negro is the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Too long has the Negro worker's dinner pail been almost empty while the dinner pail of the other workers has been comparatively full. The future of the Negro is inextricably bound up with that of labor and consequently, the sooner this fact is realized by both black and white workers the faster will speed the day of emancipation from economic slavery of all who usefully work whether by hand or by brain.

"The Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers" will adopt as its slogan, *"Union hours, Union wages and Union conditions for every Negro worker in the City of New York."* The task the Committee faces is by no means an easy one, it must do both educational and organizing work; it must organize the unorganized workers and it must aid in education both Negro and white workers toward a realization of their common economic interest. It must not alone get Negro workers into the unions of their trades, but it must also stand by them in the fight for justice inside of their unions; it will serve the Negro workers as the Woman's Trade Union League serves the women Trade Unionists as the "United Hebrew Trades" serves the Jewish workers and as the Italian Chamber of Labor serves the Italian workers.

This Committee ought to receive the instant and genuine support of the far-seeing men and women of the race. It must be plain to all that in strengthening the earning capacity of the workers of our race, we are directly strengthening the entire race; for when the Negro worker's dinner pail is full, when his pay envelope is fuller, it is then that the professional men of the race, the fraternal organizations of the race, the churches and other institutions of the race will be greatly benefitted and their permanent prosperity more assured, to say nothing of the social and educational improvements which will come to the group, and lastly, "the Committee" needs financial support; this support it will not get and does not want from those whose selfish interests are protected by having the Negro workers unorganized where they can be more effectively abused and exploited. It does not want and it cannot get, financial support from the enemies of organized labor. It is to organized labor and to the sympathizers of organized labor that it must look for support; every race-conscious and class-conscious Negro in particular, ought to come forward now and aid in this the worthiest of all attempt to bring relief to the hard pressed and brutally exploited toilers of our race.

Checks and money orders should be made out to the treasurer, Thomas J. Curtis and addressed to the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers, 2380 7th Avenue, New York City, Room 504.

All Negro workers desiring to join the union of their trade should come to our headquarters and consult the secretary.

## 23. GREATEST LABOR MEETING IN THE HISTORY OF HARLEM

## Mass Meeting of Negro Labor

Dressmakers	Pullman Porters	Elevator Operators
Laborers	Bricklayers	Laundry Workers
Painters	Theatre Artists	Taxi Drivers
Hotel Employees	Carpenters	Building Supt's
Relief Employees	Tailors	R.R. Station Porters
Musicians	Truck Drivers	Longshoremen
Domestic Workers	Motion Picture Operators	Etc., Etc.

## AT ROCKLAND PALACE

155th Street and Eighth Avenue, N.Y.

Sunday, January 6th, at 3 P.M.

The recent San Francisco Convention of the American Federation of Labor made history. Negro and White Labor MUST UNITE to win for all peoples Economic and Social Justice. Only by organization and education of Negro and White Labor can we save ourselves from the swamps of poverty, unemployment, lynchings and race prejudice. JOIN THE BONA FIDE UNION OF YOUR TRADE--NOW!

## SPEAKERS

WILLIAM GREEN, President, A.F. of L.

WILL PRESENT A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO NEGRO LABOR

DAVID DUBINSKY <sup>136</sup>

Vice-President American Federation of  
Labor, Pres. International Ladies'  
Garment Workers' Union

A. PHILLIP RANDOLPH  
President, Brotherhood of  
of Sleeping Car Porters  
Union, American Federa-  
tion of Labor

JAMES BAMBRINCK

President, Building Service Employees'  
Union, Local 32-B

WILLIAM COLLINS  
New York Representative,  
A.F. of L.

FRANK R. CROSSWAITH

Chairman, Harlem Labor Committee; General Organizer,  
International Garment Workers' Union, A.F. of L.

Special Program--MAXIM BRODY The Celebrated Radio Tenor-Artist WILL SING

For information on How to Join Your Union. Consult HARLEM LABOR COMMITTEE,  
2005 Seventh Avenue.

Flier in possession of the editors.

## 24. CALL FOR THE FIRST NEGRO LABOR CONFERENCE

Call to local unions affiliated with the A.F. of L.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

As an alert unit of the organized labor movement of this city, you are aware of the efforts of the Harlem Labor Committee to bring to the Negro worker the message of trade unionism and remove him beyond the reach of open-shoppers, anti-labor and these impatient elements who constantly seek to use Negro labor in their game to break labor standards and disrupt organized labor. Space will not permit a full recount of the Committee's service to the Negro worker and



organized labor, but the Central Trades and Labor Council of Greater New York at its last meeting highly commended our work and all enlightened sections of the labor movement have recognized its value.

It is becoming increasingly clear to all, that if labor is to conserve the gains already made and add to them, the Negro worker must become more truly an integral part of the labor movement. We feel that the invaluable service which the United Hebrew Trades and Women's Trade Union League are rendering to labor among their respective groups may be duplicated among Negro workers with equal advantage to the organized labor movement.

In order to create the agency which will apply the principle of the United Hebrew Trades and Women's Trade Union League to the problems of the Negro worker, a conference will be held on: Saturday, July 20, 1935, at 1 P.M., at the Renaissance Casino, Seventh Avenue and West 138th Street.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon your organization to select two (2) delegates to represent it at this conference. Please notify us immediately of the identity of your delegates. A fee of \$1.00 is requested for each delegate to cover conference costs. The conference will be representative of only trade unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

Fraternally yours,

Frank R. Crosswaith, Chairman, Harlem Labor Committee  
 Morris Fienstene, Executive Secretary, United Hebrew Trades  
 James J. Bambrick, President, Building Service Employees Union, 32-B  
 A. Philip Randolph, President, Bhd. Sleeping Car Porters  
 Julius Hechman, Vice-Pres. International Ladies Garment Workers Union  
 Noah C. A. Walter, Jr., Secy. Arrangements Committee

Invitation to Fraternal Organizations:

Dear Friend:

Enclosed is a Call for the first Negro Labor Conference to be held on Saturday, July 20, 1935, at the Renaissance Casino, 138th Street and 7th Avenue. The Conference will consider the problem of the Negro worker and his relationship to the organized labor movement, with a view of establishing an agency that will serve the Negro worker in his efforts to organize as an integral part of the legitimate labor movement.

Because of your well known interest in matters affecting the well being of the Negro worker, we are calling upon your organization to have an representative attend the Conference as a Fraternal Delegate.

Fraternally yours,

Frank R. Crosswaith, Chairman  
 Noah C. A. Walter, Jr., Secretary

Negro Labor Committee Papers, Shromburg Collection, New York Public Library, New York.

25. PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST NEGRO LABOR CONFERENCE, 1935

Sponsored by the Negro Labor Committee

Participating Organizations:

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, N.Y. Joint Board  
 American Federation of Musicians, Local #802  
 Amalgamated Ladies Garment Cutters Union, Local #10, ILGWU  
 Bakery and Confectionery Workers Union, Local #507  
 Blouse and Waistmakers Union, Local #25, ILGWU  
 Bookkeepers, Stenographers, and Accountants Union, Local #12646

Bonnaz Singer and Hand Embroiderers, Tuckers, Stitchers, and Pleaters Union,  
 Local #66, ILGWU  
 Bricklayers Union, Local #37  
 Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters  
 Brotherhood of Carpenters, Local #385  
 Brotherhood of Painters, Local #261  
 Building Service Employees Union, 32B  
 Building Service Employees Union, 10B  
 Building Service Employees Union, 149B  
 Capmakers Union, Local #1  
 Carpenters and Joiners Union, Local #1888  
 Celluloid, Catalin, Galalith Workers Union  
 Children's Dress and Housedressmakers Union, Local #91, ILGWU  
 Cloak, Skirt and Dress Pressers Union Local, #35, ILGWU  
 Cleaners, Dyers, and Pressers Union  
 Cloak, Dress Drivers and Helpers Union, Local #102, ILGWU  
 Cloak and Suit Tailors Union, Local, #9, ILGWU  
 Cooks and Kitchen Workers Union, Local #69  
 Corset and Brassiere Workers Union, Local #32  
 Dining Car Employees Union, Local #370  
 Doll and Toy Workers Union, Local #18230  
 Dressmakers Union, Local #22, ILGWU  
 Dress and Waist Pressers Union, Local #60, ILGWU  
 Excavators and Building Laborers Union, Local #731  
 Greater N.Y. Council International Building Service Union  
 Italian Dressmakers Union, Local #89, ILGWU  
 Joint Council Knit Goods Workers Union  
 Joint Board Cloak, Suit, and Shirtmakers Union  
 Joint Board Dress and Waistmakers Union  
 Ladies Apparel Shipping Clerks Union, Local #19953  
 Ladies Neckwear Workers Union, Local #142, ILGWU  
 Ladies Tailors and Theatrical Custom Workers Union, Local #36, ILGWU  
 Laundry Workers International Union  
 Laundry Workers Union, Local #290  
 Millinery Workers Union, Local #24  
 Mineral Water Workers Union, Local #331  
 Motion Picture Operators Union, Local #306  
 Painters and Decorators of America, Local #848  
 Painters, Decorators, Paperhangers of America, District Council, Local #9  
 Pocketbook Workers International Union  
 Paperbox Makers Union  
 Retail Dairy, Grocery, and Fruit Clerks Union, Local #338  
 Retail Hat and Furnishings Salesmen's Union, Local #721  
 Suitcase, Bag and Portfolio Workers Union  
 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners Union, Local #2090  
 Upholsterers' Carpet, and Linoleum Mechanics International Union of No. Amer.,  
 Local #140B  
 United Hebrew Trades  
 Van Drivers and Helpers Union, Local #814

#### Fraternal Organizations Represented

Home Relief Bureau Employees Association  
 Ministers Union National  
 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
 National Urban League  
 Problem's Cooperative Association  
 Union Mechanics Association  
 Workmen's Circle - (Branches 66, 66B, 277, 500, 543, 536, 417)  
 Workers' Unemployed Union of Greater New York City  
 Ashland Place Branch, Brooklyn, Young Women's Christian Association

#### Credentials Committee

Noah C. A. Walter, Jr., Harlem Labor Committee  
 Ernest Cherry, Motion Picture Operators Union, Local #306

Maxine Dandridge, Housedress and Children's Dressmakers Union, Local #91 ILGWU  
Isabelle Harding, Dressmakers Union, Local #22, ILGWU  
P. A. Moore, Dining Car Employees Union, Local #370  
Winifred Gittens, Blouse and Waistmakers Union, Local #25, ILGWU  
Norman Donawa, Dross and Waist Pressers Union, Local #60, ILGWU

Brother William Mahoney, N.Y. State Organizer of the A.F. of L. was introduced, and spoke as follows:

Mr. Chairman, Fellow Members and Fellow Officials of the A.F. of L.:

I see before me a great many familiar faces. I want to apologize for my vocal condition, which is the result of a strenuous battle the other day to get six workers out of jail. They put me in an automobile with my clothing soaking wet with perspiration and the result is the loss of my voice.

There is a communication from President William Green which will be read to you by one of your representatives, and it will much more clearly set forth the position of the Federation with regard to the Negro workers. This matter of proper organization into the bona fide Labor movement in America of the Negro has been mighty near to our hearts for many years. It is about time that something was done along that line. Only too long have the greedy employers used Negroes against whites and whites against Negroes. It is part of a carefully laid plan to keep them from organizing as workers, both Negro and white.

Now I am glad this movement has been started. It has been needed for many years. By the roster call of delegates there is no question but what the Labor movement is standing behind you. I am going to be brief. You know the need. Nobody knows it better than our brother, Frank R. Crosswaith, and Brother Randolph, who only recently, after ten years of struggle finally achieved victory in forcing recognition of the Pullman Porters Union. It is pretty evident that the need is great.

Some months ago I attended a meeting of the Negro Vaudeville Actors. In my organization there are no Negroes, but of course, they have never been barred from my organization. From the beginning we took everybody regardless of color. I have only attended the meeting of the Vaudeville Actors once, and I can see the necessity of pointing out the need for organization of Negro workers and Negro artists. It is a long needed.

I want to promise this group that as the Organizer of the New York Branch of the American Federation of Labor, and in behalf of William Collins, if you should need us at any time to address a meeting or be helpful in any way at a conference or anything concerning you, please call upon us. As President Green's letter clearly states there shall be no discrimination against fellow workers on account of creed, color, or nationality in the A.F. of L. All workers have only too long been bled against one another. That day is passing. All sections of Labor are standing under the banner of the bonafide movement which is the A.F. of L. The working class has been exploited. So, pack up shop. There is plenty to be done. It is going to be a tremendous task.

I shall look back in future years and be proud of the fact that I was able to speak at the opening of this meeting. God bless you! And, go to it!

The following officers were nominated and elected:

Chairman: Frank R. Crosswaith  
Vice-Chairman: Albert Perry and Jacob Mirsky  
Secretaries: Noah C. A. Walter, Jr. and Clifford McLeod

Note:- Brother A. Philip Randolph was nominated as Chairman but declined in favor of Brother Frank R. Crosswaith.

Acceptance Speech of Brother Frank R. Crosswaith.

Brothers and Fellow Workers:

Permit me to express my deep and sincere appreciation of your kindness in electing me to preside over this most important and significant event. I hope, that during the course of our deliberations, we will keep in mind one particular thing. We want to make a record here this afternoon--we want to demonstrate to those who do not yet know that a group of Negro and white trade unionists can meet for the purpose of legislating on matters of common vital importance, not only to themselves, but to the entire working class movement

of the United States, and do it intelligently and with dispatch. I am pleading with you now, that as we go along to meet our minds on the various questions to come before us, let us keep out of our discussions any rancor or bitterness. We want to be as decorous and tolerant to each other as organized and disciplined men and women; so that after the adjustment of this Conference, we can feel that we are leaving a monument in procedure and intelligent deliberation to the movement of which we are a part.

You heard Brother Mahoney in his brief opening address say that the effort we are now making has long been needed in the working class movement of this city and nation. May I not remind those of you who have forgotten, and also those of you who may not know that ten years ago right here in this segregated section of New York City a group of trade unionists established an agency which dealt effectively with the problems that then faced the Negro workers of this city. Out of a Conference held on May 23rd in the lower East side was born the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers. In that Conference the honor was paid to me of selecting to serve as Executive Secretary of the Committee. Those of you who are newcomers in the labor movement of this city ought to know that in the brief span of four months the Trade Union Committee was actively organizing Negro workers. Hundreds of them were inducted in the unions of their trade. Those workers were accustomed to long hours and low wages without any protection on their jobs. One of the outstanding achievements of the Trade Union Committee was the bringing together of the Negro Motion Picture Operators, who were working in the city but not within the folds of the union. Through the efforts of the Committee, these men were able to find their rightful place in their unions receiving the benefits and privileges, and sharing the responsibilities that go to trade union men and women. We have come together again for the purpose of reviving the effort we then made. We have new ideas, we have grown, and some of us have a particular desire to retrace the grounds we once trod. Apart from the importance of uniting the working class, black and white, we have kept before our mind's eye the fact that no matter how narrow-minded and bigoted and blind may be some members of the organized labor movement in this city and in other cities, we, nevertheless, have everywhere some who are intelligent and emancipated. They are convinced that white workers never will and never can be free until, and unless, Negro workers also are free. We want an organization to teach Negro workers that they must not be shunted off on some ground and hope to battle effectively in this modern industrial hell without the aid of the organized white working class. And, because, we recognize the common interest of the two groups, we are determined to foster and shape an agency that will serve to unify the working class of both races, as well as for the purpose of eliminating from the arena of the American labor movement, all forms of racial prejudice and discrimination in any section of the A.F. of L. I am convinced it is the only way to meet the problem. We know this is America, and we know that race prejudice and segregation and all other such dastardly and evil things sprout from the 245 years of slavery. We expect opposition to our efforts. But we must go forward regardless of opposition. You know it was Anatole France to whom the group of newspaper men once went while he was making<sup>137</sup> an address at the Sorbonne in France. The newspaper men approached him and said, "Monsieur France, we want you to describe for us the most fascinating picture your eyes have ever beheld." Those newspaper men, because of Anatole France's ability to make his language sing, expect him to paint in words an alluring picture of a landscape or a sunset, or some house resting upon the rim of rolling hills, or the rippling waters of a sea or lake. But Anatole France looked them in the eyes for a few moments and replied: "The most fascinating, the most alluring picture I have ever seen is the picture of a man standing at the feet of a mountain with his coat turned up, his teeth grit, his head bent forward, attempting to climb that mountain in the midst of a raging storm." "That to me," said Anatole France, "is the most fascinating picture I have seen, for it bespeaks courage, faith, and the will to do." This conference this afternoon is indicative of that spirit, the spirit of the new Negro and the spirit of the emancipated white trade unionists. We are at the foot of the hill, our teeth are grit, our coat collars turned up, our heads bent forward, and we intend to climb this hill come what may. We are going to climb together for the good of the Negro workers of this country and the general good of the workers of the United States. As Negroes we need to appreciate

the fact that ever since we have been emancipated we have spent most of our lives on our knees begging for mercy or justice. Yes--our pleas and tears and cries have reached the clouds in the skies, if you please, but in spite of our pleas and tears, what has happened--we are still being lynched, still being brutalized, still being segregated in American life, and in certain sections of the labor movement our fundamental rights as workers are still denied. We are here to give evidence that a new type of Negro is now standing for equality, shedding his swaddling clothes and about to step out upon the stage of American life; A Negro in whose makeup there is no place for pleas, for mercy; a Negro with no tears to shed, but a Negro who appreciates the fact that we are living in a world of wolves and if he is to survive he must develop his own claws, and he must have courage. This new Negro is a result of certain economic and social conditions; and just as these conditions produced this new Negro they have also produced the new white man--the new white man who has left the old moorings of race prejudice, and who recognizes that labor is the common denominator of us all. To advance the economic interests of all mankind is the supreme purpose of this conference--solidarity between the new Negro and the new white man in the American Labor Movement is our goal. I have heard it said that what the Negro needs is education. Well, there are many educated people in this hall, I am one of those unfortunately who did not have a chance for a formal education. When I was 13 years old my father died and his death took me out of the school room--at the age of thirteen in the fifth grade--and I have been working ever since. Nevertheless, I appreciate the importance of education, but I want to confess that there is something more important than education, and that something is courage. I know many so-called educated people who are without courage, but if you have courage you can acquire an education.

I have before me two letters addressed to the Conference, and another addressed to me. The one addressed to me is not so important but the ones addressed to you I want you to hear. The first is from President Wm. Green of the A.F. of L. It reads as follows:

TO THE OFFICERS AND DELEGATES IN ATTENDANCE AT THE NEGRO LABOR CONFERENCE.

My Fellow Workers:

I sincerely regret because of the multiplicity of duties I am called upon to discharge in an official way it is impossible for me to accept the invitation extended to me to attend and address your conference. However, I wish to assure you that I am deeply interested in the purpose of the conference and in the economic and industrial welfare of all those who may be in attendance and of those they represent. It is the purpose and objective of the American Federation of Labor to organize all workers regardless of creed, color, sex, or nationality. Notwithstanding what those may say who are constantly assailing its policies, principles and procedure, there is no organization in America which stands more firmly for the protection of the economic rights of all classes of people regardless of creed, color, or nationality. We are constantly endeavoring to promote a condition where all international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, clothed with autonomous authority, will conform to the declarations, procedure and principles of the A.F. of L., itself regarding the admission of members without regard to race, creed, or nationality. We are certain that time, patience and good judgment will bring about a solution of our vexed problem.

In the meantime it becomes the duty of the representatives of all workers to cooperate together not in denunciation of each other but in a common purpose to compose all differences and to solve our economic and industrial problems.

I repeat my assurance of an official and personal interest in the welfare of the Negroes everywhere and particularly of those who are in attendance at your conference and those whom they have the honor to represent.

William Green, President  
American Federation of Labor

The other letter is from Mr. David Dubinsky, President I.L.G.W.U., which reads as follows:

"I greet the idea of your Negro Labor Conference and the objections which

it strives to attain--the expansion of the trade union movement under a directing and coordinating agency--because of the experience we, in the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union, have had with organizing Negro workers in our industries and of the highly satisfactory results we have achieved in this direction.

"Our International Union through all the thirty-five years of its existence has maintained a tradition of open door to all races, languages and nationalities. And we are happy to declare that this platform of genuine equality has been rewarded by a loyalty and a devotion on the part of our Negro brothers and sisters which is not excelled in the fraternity of organized labor in America. Though comparatively newcomers--as far as large numbers are concerned, in the I.L.G.W.U., our Negro fellow workers have proved themselves to be valiant fighters in the trade union cause and a true asset to the organization.

"In wishing you success in your undertaking, may I express the hope that other unions may benefit from our experience so splendidly demonstrated in New York City and in other centers, which permits no other conclusion but that it is the sacred duty of all labor organizations to offer the widest opportunity and cooperation to the unionization movement among the hundreds of thousands of Negro wage earners as a powerful lover for solidifying and strengthening the cause of organized labor in America as a whole."

Fraternally yours,

David Dubinsky, President  
International Ladies Garment Workers  
Union

Here also is a telegram received from Mr. Max Danish, editor "Justice" official organ. Int'l Ladies Garment Workers Union:

TO FRANK R. CROSSWAITH, CHAIRMAN NEGRO LABOR CONFERENCE  
RENAISSANCE CASINO 138 ST AND 7th AVE.

GREETINGS TO YOUR DELEGATES ASSEMBLED TO LAY CORNERSTONE FOR CENTRAL BODY OF  
NEGRO LABOR IN NEW YORK STOP YOUR CONSTRUCTIVE OBJECTIVES INSPIRE THE UN-  
FLAGGED CONFIDENCE OF COUNTLESS FRIENDS IN YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE HISTORIC  
CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAUSE OF MILLIONS OF NEGRO WORKERS IN AMERICA.

MAX DANISH EDITOR JUSTICE

The Chairman then introduced Mrs. Elise McDougall Ayers, Principal of Public School No. 24, and a former Vice-President of the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers, who spoke as follows:

Mr. Chairman and Friends:

I feel at a decided disadvantage as I am not an orator such as Mr. Crosswaith. I am simply a school teacher whose contact with the working people occurs each and every day, and I think it is a point which is very dear to the hearts of the working people--their children.

As a teacher I cannot fail to take a keen interest in the working people because I am a worker--a teacher-worker with the heart of a worker. I see every day, especially at this time of economic stress, the great evils of low wages and long hours--evils that will be reflected in the future generation--and the handicaps that low wages and long hours, poor food, little food and poor health will mean to the worker of the future. I think the greatest evil of all the economic ills is the one that touches the child.

The Trade Union Movement is again looking toward the organization of Negroes in all trades, and the meeting in 1925 had the appearance very much of this meeting. There were delegates representing many unions and they were sincere delegates, willing to give time and money. The work started off very auspiciously. There was just one difference. The movement then did not originate with the Trade Unions. It was really the brain-child of philanthropic and welfare organizations. But the soundness of the thing of organizing Negro workers was appreciated by the Trade Union although it did not originate with them. I think perhaps what makes this more favorable for success is that this is originating in the minds of Trade Unionists, themselves.

Between 1925 and 1935, Mr. Crosswaith has grown and he has become a responsible official within the union movement! and Mr. Randolph has grown. Both of these men, as well as myself, have seen the tricks and deceits and hypocrisy. I think that both are even better prepared than they were ten years ago to save the ship from going on the rocks. It was simply overwhelming trickery and underhanded deception that made the other Trade Union Committee fail. I do not believe it was because of lack of interest on the part of the Trade Unions. The Committee was well started. The money began to come in from the Trade Unions. They were supporting the union and constantly called upon Mr. Crosswaith to help them solve some problems where the Negro workers were concerned. But the enemies that constantly seek to defeat the working people, by one trick or another, became very active and strangely enough, Mr. Green, a letter from whom we have just heard, listened to the welfare people more than he did to the Trade Union workers, themselves. In a short time the movement died for lack of nourishment. This time I believe that won't happen. I think President Green has probably found out that Negroes have grown with more determination; that Negroes are not going to be satisfied to be shoved aside. They have enough friends in the Trade Unions and there is more understanding by Negroes of what the Trade Union means than there was ten years ago. For that reason I came here to congratulate you, the representatives of many unions; Mr. Crosswaith and Mr. Randolph for their persistence and courage. It will take a great deal of these two things to get the Trade Union movement launched among Negroes.

Personally, my work takes me back to the children, and I am hoping that I am going to be able to do something with the youngsters to make them more conscious. I think we probably spend too much time in schools teaching things that are not real. I believe children should learn just as well from real things. I am fooling around as I go for some way of bringing real things to children, even as young as I handle, as we teach only through the sixth grade, to start to create a consciousness that there is more to it than a job--the protection of the job. We must start early to make them conscious and not let them grow up in total ignorance, because Negro children do not hear it in their homes as a great many white children do. White children's fathers and mothers talk about it. Not so much is heard about organizations of that kind in Negro children's homes.

Mr. Crosswaith very wisely said he wished only a short address, and I am going to limit myself. I shall stop just where I am, but wish to offer my time and interest and what experience I might have that would come in handy to this movement. I wish to assure Mr. Crosswaith, as ten years ago, that we can put our heads together and decide things.

Now Mr. Crosswaith is equipped and in a better position to do many things, and with the help of Mr. Randolph who is our most experienced fighter along these lines, I am sure this conference will be not only successful, but the work that follows will not die, be killed off or strangled. They now have wisdom.

Mrs. Ayers speech was followed by:

The Report of the Organization Committee

"Because, of the deepening crisis in modern capitalism of which the existing industrial depression is an acute manifestation, the workers of America, Black and white, face a decisive challenge to grapple not only with the immediate problems of work, wages and relief but also with the deeper question of ultimately achieving industrial democracy.

"At present all workers are the victims of economic insecurity, and social and political terrorism; however, because of the fact that various historical conditions have made the Negroes a marginal worker--being the first fired and the last hired--and because of the existence of a vicious and brutal system of American jim-crowism, segregation and discrimination Negro workers find themselves doubly exploited and oppressed.

"According to the 1930 U.S. Census there are nearly 11,000,000 Negroes in America and it is a matter of common knowledge that the great majority of Negro people are workers, securing their living by the sale of their labor power on the market from day to day.

"In New York City according to responsible social service agencies while the Negro constitutes 5% of the total population, the Negro jobless represent more than 19% of the unemployed. According to conservative estimates there

are not more than 12,000 Negro workers embraced in the trade union movement of this city. Therefore it is obvious that the great mass of Negro workers are without collective bargaining power with which to protect their economic interest and assert their rights.

"A continuation of this tragic condition is not only harmful to the best interests of the Negro worker but plays into the hands of the exploiters of all labor and the enemies of the labor movement.

"Because, of the forementioned conditions existing in relation to the Negro workers, workers coming from various trades and callings in this conference do herewith announce and proclaim their belief and commitment to the creation of an instrumentality that will promote the cause of the organization of Negro workers into the existing bonafide trade unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

"It is the sense of this conclave that such an instrumentality take the form of a Committee representative of the spirit, sentiment and trade union policy reflected in these deliberations.

"It is the collective judgment of this body that this Committee shall be known by the name of THE NEGRO LABOR COMMITTEE.

"THE NEGRO LABOR COMMITTEE shall be composed of 25 Negro and white members of various bonafide trade unions.

"The officers of THE NEGRO LABOR COMMITTEE shall be: Chairman; 5 vice-chairmen; executive secretary; financial secretary; and others not herewith stated to be appointed by THE COMMITTEE.

"The financial support of THE NEGRO LABOR COMMITTEE shall come from those trade unionists and bonafide labor organizations who are in accord with the policy and program of THE COMMITTEE.

"The general program and activities of THE NEGRO LABOR COMMITTEE shall conform to and be in harmony with the policy and program of the American Federation of Labor."

#### The Committee on Organization:

A. Philip Randolph, President of Sleeping Car Porters  
 Thomas Young, Vice-president Building Service Employees Union, 32-B  
 Elica Riley, Dressmakers' Union #22, I.L.G.W.U.  
 Jack Butler, Taxis Chauffeurs Union #19795 A.F. of L.  
 William Alex. Conaway, American Federation of Musicians, #802

Before this report was voted upon, a general discussion from the floor ensued. A part of which follows:

#### Brother Mirsky (Bricklayers Union):

"I feel that I should have something to say in the matter, and I hope that this will not turn into whether or not this labor organization will create Jim Crowism or discrimination. The paragraph reads, "The Negro Labor Committee shall be composed of 25 Negro and white members of various bonafide trade unions."

It is possible that some people may have applied to the A.F. of L. for a charter, and did not get it, but the fact remains in the eyes of the bona fide trade unions that such persons will not be officially recognized as bona fide members of unions until they are chartered. There is nothing to stop them from applying or getting the same rights as bonafide members get now, when they are chartered. It certainly would be doing both of us harm by refusing them their charter. I am speaking for a few conservative organizations, and my own unit, and the entire building trades industry.

We are part and parcel of the A.F. of L., and if they do anything illegal to you and us, we still insist that the A.F. of L. is the bonafide labor organization, and we will not recognize any organization unless it is affiliated with the A.F. of L.

I don't want that presumption to stand that there is discrimination; and if there is--and I say that any movement organized for union endeavor is far from being infallible--but if there is, this Negro Labor Committee, as it functions, will overcome those things. But don't create an ill feeling at the very beginning. Let's organize. Let's get together as proposed by the Organization Committee. All these differences will be ironed out after we grow up, but if we are setting out to create friction, let's quit!"



The Chairman then recognized Brother Morris Feinstene, of the United Hebrew Trades, who said:

"I fully agree with Brother Mirsky. True, there is discrimination. If we didn't have discrimination, and if the Negro workers were organized, we would not be here this afternoon. We would not try to organize this conference. But it is the purpose of this Negro Labor Committee to organize Negroes to existing bonafide trade unions, and to oppose any form of discrimination and battle for the rights of all labor. I believe those who want to bring in an issue at this time in order to use the organization at its very inception to force themselves into the A.F. of L., means the breaking up of the efforts of this Conference this afternoon. Don't use this organization for that purpose. I don't know why the A.F. of L. refused your application for a charter, but I know this--if this organization grows in strength it will become a factor in the labor movement, and wherever black and white laborers may be they will shake hands as brothers and recognize each other as such. Then this organization will be able to come to the A.F. of L. and tell of the wrongs done to them. You have something. Use it for your own purpose. But to use it at the very beginning as a side door to break in is wrong because it is not motivated by that brotherly spirit of creating something.

I know wrongs are being done by the A.F. of L., and President Green himself, states it very often; but they are trying to adjust this matter, and this conference if successful and cooperative, will get all the unions in the A.F. of L. to have their say and get their just due if wronged. But don't use it at the very beginning and break up before you start. It is really the only thing that may win the support and sympathy of the entire labor movement of America.

Regarding the paragraph which reads: "The Negro Labor Committee shall be composed of 25 Negro and white members of various bonafide trade unions;"--What does it mean? Just this: If we organize the Negro workers and try to bring them into the A.F. of L., and they are refused, there must be a cause, and if there is no cause, we have reason to put up a fight because this conference will speak in the name of so many thousands--in the name of the A.F. of L., and our voices will be heard. So accept it right now as it is. Work with us for the common interest of all."

The Chairman then recognized A. Philip Randolph, President Brotherhood Sleeping Car Porters Union and Chairman of the Organization Committee, to close the discussion.

#### Brother Randolph's Remarks:

"In commenting on this aspect of the resolutions, I might say that the Committee is in sympathy with some of the ideas expressed by the first speaker, but the Committee believes the only way to adjust this matter is by developing a machine that represents some strength, and in order to develop such a machine it must be composed of some existing organizations that already have the support and recognition of the A.F. of L. When we develop such an organization then we can go out and fight for the very cause that was expressed by the first speaker.

As a matter of fact, the relief workers represent a most important group in America at this time, because labor is beginning to direct its attention to the organization of relief workers. We are concerned with them, because relief workers contact relief clients and therefore can be of great service to Negro and white employed workers seeking relief.

This organization will work with various groups of workers, with all Negro workers, to organize them and get them into the A.F. of L. We realize their logical place is in the A.F. of L. and the program is to develop a policy where this may be effected. There is no disposition to exclude any group of workers from the Negro Labor Committee. In answer to the statement that there are no color bars in unions affiliated with the A.F. of L., you can find them--clauses of race, and color barriers against Negro workers. We recognize it--President Green recognizes it. The only way to change them, however, is by developing the Negro Labor Committee. That is the purpose of this conference. We can't do everything in the beginning, but I am making a broad and general statement of the policy and the general work to be carried on. It is our general purpose to include all workers. It shall be the efforts of this organization to go out, organize all workers, and then go to the A.F. of L. and demand that they be admitted or find the reason why."

Note:- (The above discussions arose from an intemperate attack upon the A.F. of L. and the Conference by a fraternal delegate representing the Relief Employees' Association. Neither he nor his organization had been originally invited to the Conference. Through an error he was given a credential instead of a visitor's card. His was the only discordant note in the Conference).

Upon a motion, the report of the Organization Committee was adopted by a vote of 72 for--and 3 against. After the vote was announced, the Chairman then presented A. Philip Randolph.

#### Brother Randolph's Speech:

Brother Chairman, Delegates and Fellow Workers of the Negro Labor Conference:

"I am indeed glad to see the remarkable interest in a conference of this nature. The workers of America are facing the most serious period in their history, and, of course, the Negro workers who represent the group that is the weakest, they are facing a doubly serious period in their life. As a matter of fact, we are facing the decline of a system, viz., the disintegration of modern capitalism. This is the result of tendencies inherent in the system. Beginning over a period of some twenty-five years ago, these tendencies have become sharper and sharper, until today, we have reached a period where it is practically impossible for modern capitalism to function in meeting the needs and conditions that are essential to its own existence and perpetuity. These disintegrating tendencies handicap, stifle, and tend to destroy all the forces of civil liberties--forces that make for the development of the labor movement. In Germany today there is no trade union movement. Twenty years ago, if you would have told anyone that the trade union movement of Germany would have gone into decline, they would have looked upon you as a lunatic. Today that great organization of workers has been smashed and driven underground. What is true of Germany is also true of Italy. In America and England, forces of Fascism are developing with remarkable speed. In America, Negro workers face this danger because already we are victims of exploitation, and oppression in the South, with its vicious system of Jim Crowism; of segregation and discrimination, lynching and mob law; the elimination of Negroes from the public school system; this has been going on in the south for the last fifty years. Consequently, what the fascist movements are bringing to the workers in this section are those tendencies and condition which have existed for Negroes ever since the passing of the slave system. The passing of slavery did not result in the complete emancipation of the Negro worker. As a matter of fact, the Civil War was not a complete revolution. It did not bring to the workers universal suffrage, the right to participate in the public school system in the democratic parliamentary structure. More than any other group in America, Negroes need to develop economic strength and organize with white workers to fight and abolish all forms and forces that attack their rights as workers.

Unless workers develop organized power, to fight militantly for their rights, we shall soon find there will be no workers organization in America, and that all workers will be treated like the black laborer in Georgia and other sections of the south. Think of Tom Mooney who has been rotting in prison for 15 years or more; and Angelo Herndon who faces the chain gang in Georgia; of the Scottsboro boys--and others.

We must meet that situation, by developing power on the part of labor, black and white. We must wipe out all forms of discrimination, segregation and Jim Crowism in the A.F. of L. These evils are not always in the Constitution. But everybody admits it. Only recently a conference was held in Washington for the purpose of going into this question. That conference brought out many facts about discrimination by one group of workers against another. By virtue of that hearing, no doubt some serious attempt will be made to remedy these conditions. Hearings should be held in all parts of the country so that informed persons may be able to appear and tell of the difficulties Negro workers meet when they attempt to come into the A.F. of L.

That Conference was the outcome of a resolution adopted at the A.F. of L. Convention in San Francisco on the question of the relation of the Negro to the Federation. This indicates to you the necessity of some organization such as we propose which can go to the A.F. of L. with petitions and demand that a national or international union having a color bar be expelled from the A.F. of L.

There can be no solidarity if one is considered a black worker and another a white worker. He should be considered just a worker. We intend to abolish discrimination and segregation. Our fight is not against the A.F. of L. As a matter of fact, we are concerned about strengthening and building the A.F. of L., making it a more powerful organization to fight for the interest of all labor. The purpose and aim of this organization is to bring this about. So, my friends, the meeting here this afternoon, to my mind, marks an important stage in the workers' life--black and white. It should have come into existence long ago.

I want to pay tribute to Comrade Crosswaith whose instrumental genius, spirit, courage and fortitude, devotion and loyalty to the cause of the worker is responsible for this fine, constructive conference. As a matter of fact, he has been engaged in the labor movement for twenty years, fighting side by side with the white workers in the interest of developing organizations for the workers. He has gone on the picket line, and to jail; engaged in strikes; done everything to carry labor's message to all workers.

This is the crystallization of these struggles he has made. It is very timely that all sections of organized labor realize the necessity of getting behind this movement. We will get no consideration unless we have power. So, my friends, we have come to a very auspicious period in the life of the Negro. He is the downtrodden worker in America. Negroes represent a great force in the South. Unless they organize in the South, there will be no enduring labor movement.

There is now a tendency on the part of the black and white workers in the South to organize. You have read of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, where there are black and white, in Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi, fighting against their common enemy Capitalism and Landlordism. I think it is one of the most significant movements in America. An organization like this can be helpful in supporting a fight of this kind, and in sending organizers into those regions.

This organization can carry on an effective campaign of education among workers--not education in the ordinary sense, but around some control and vital question. All of the problems that will arise can be dealt with, but we must have something with which to fight--a weapon--an instrumentality. An attempt will be made to build such out of this conference. When this is done, we can come forth and throw our strong arm of protection around every worker, whether they are workers before the courts, the school system or in the home. You will have an organization which will go out and attempt to fight for workers in order that they will be able to enjoy their rights regardless of race, creed, or color.

We have waited for the unions to do this work. We have waited for half a century. Some instrumentality has got to be developed to do this work with force, courage and militancy. The Pullman Porters have thrown their lot with you because they know what it is to suffer. They have been set upon by gunmen and gangsters, and made to shed blood before railroad yards. A movement like this faces a hard struggle. This will be no easy task. First, you have got to fight organized business, and secondly, race prejudice in the unions everywhere. You do not find many Abe Millers, Morris Feinstenes, James Bambricks, or Jacob Mirskys, who believe in the solidarity of the workers.

My friends, I would not want to exist in this world if I did not have the capacity to recognize the justice of organizing all workers, regardless of their race, nationality or religion. In America, the Jews, although they have more strength than Negroes, plus the advantage of being white of skin and consequently not picked out as easily as Negroes, nevertheless, there is a deep, anti-semitic current in America developing feeling against Jewish workers. Here in Harlem, we have serious problems. I note a tendency to transfer the opposition of Mussolini to Italian workers. This is dangerous.

There is also a movement in Harlem--I have watched it with care--it is a dangerous anti-semitic movement. I think it will be necessary for some intelligent Negroes to take the field and fight that movement. An organization such as this can offset it. I believe that movement is backed by unseen forces. I do not know who they are, but we must find out. I am ready to take the field against any movement seeking to victimize any group of workers.

In conclusion, I want to speed you on with the realization of this epochal beginning. It is necessary that the workers in Harlem recognize that their class interests are with workers wherever they are--even those that discriminate

against you; those that have color clauses in their constitutions--because they are not enlightened and it is your duty to enlighten them. They are the victims of exploitation and false education.

I am leaving for Chicago for the purpose of making an agreement with the Pullman Company covering wages and hours. After ten years of fighting and tribulations borne by the Pullman Porters, the Company is ready to accede to meeting in Conference the Pullman Porters. The fight was won by the Pullman Porters, not by me. The Porters were willing to give up their jobs, go hungry, be evicted, put on the street. The Pullman Company is controlled by a Board of Directors composed of some of Americas most powerful financial kings. It is one of the mightiest financial aggregations in America, and the militant porters and maids conquered it.

What the Pullman Porters have done, other groups will do; and Comrade Crosswaith I bid you onward and upward. You are doing a work that will secure a new place for black and white workers, and I hope all workers will give their conscientious support to this struggle. The question of strategy and tactics will be worked out in the struggle itself.

The Chairman then called for a report from the Resolution Committee. The following resolutions were reported to the Conference in their order, and unanimously adopted.

Resolution #1 the A.F. of L. and the Negro.

WHEREAS, at the Convention of the American Federation of Labor a year ago in San Francisco there was adopted a resolution calling upon the Federation to appoint a Committee to consider the question of the Negro workers relation to the A.F. of L. and

WHEREAS, such a Committee has now been appointed by President Wm. Green and one meeting was held on July 9th in Washington, D.C., and

WHEREAS, it is becoming increasingly clear to enlightened labor and to friends of labor that unity in thought and action is essential to the promotion and protection of the economic interest of all workers be they Jews, or Gentiles, Negro or white, and

WHEREAS, it is a fact that the Negro worker has been a victim of racial discrimination in some units of the organized labor movement resulting in a more or less general hostile attitude of the Negro worker toward organized labor, such an attitude plays into the hands of labor's enemies and weakens labor in its fight for economic and social justice,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Negro Labor Conference of Negro and white trade unionists declare its unyielding opposition to all forms of racial prejudice and discriminatory practices in any part of the organized labor movement and pledges itself to combat this evil wherever manifested.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Conference call upon every section of the labor movement to remove from their constitutions by-laws, or rituals wherever such exists and all other references that reflect unfavorably upon racial groups and thus tend to maintain an unwholesome division within the ranks of organized labor, and

BE IT STILL FURTHER RESOLVED that this Conference call upon labor everywhere to close ranks and effect that greatly to be desired solidarity of labor without which there can be no salvation for either Black or white labor.

Resolution #2 The 30-Hour Week.

WHEREAS, because of the great increase in the productivity of American labor due to the technological and scientific improvements, and

WHEREAS, this increased productivity has resulted in throwing millions of Negro and white workers on the breadlines to become paupers with further result that today the estimated number of unemployed workers is about 15,000, 000, and

WHEREAS, one very definite way to increase the industrial life of the nation would be to radically reduce the work day's length for these now employed, thereby creating the need for more workers, and

WHEREAS, at the last convention in San Francisco the American Federation of Labor declared itself in favor of the 30-hour work week,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this conference of Negroes and white trade-unionists assembled in the Renaissance Casino, 138th Street and 7th Ave., New York City on July 20, 1935 herewith endorses the fight of organized labor for the 30-hour week.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the sense of this conference that this 30-hour work week shall not result in the reduction of the existing wage levels based upon the longer work week.

Resolution #3 Child Labor.

WHEREAS, in spite of claims to the contrary, child labor is still prevalent in many parts of the country, especially in the Textile industries in the South, and

WHEREAS, the employment of children tends to lower the wage level and lengthens the work day of adults. Thus child labor is a definite part of the program of the anti-labor union employers and open-shoppers, as well as a serious challenge to our claims of being civilized, and

WHEREAS, statistics point to the fact that the largest percentage of children taken from homes, schools, and playgrounds in their tender years and made to work long hours, for low wages, are the children of Negro workers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THIS Negro labor Conference go on record condemning the Legislature of New York State for failing to ratify the Child Labor Amendment, and joins in support of the nationwide fight of organized labor to have the Child Labor Amendment enacted to the U.S. Constitution with the view toward abolishing forever the exploitation of children, and advance the interest of organized labor.

Resolution #4 Workers' Rights Constitutional Amendment.

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled the NIRA and the Frazer-Lemke Act unconstitutional thereby establishing conclusive proof that the U.S. Constitution in its present form is increasingly being utilized to protect the rights of property and the interest of employing classes and to block legislation which may interfere with profits, and give genuine protection to industrial and farm workers, and

WHEREAS, if labor is to protect its interests and quicken the steps of human progress an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that will reflect the interest of the industrial and farm workers, is absolutely essential,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Negro Labor Conference of Negro and white trade unionists endorses the following HILLQUIT WORKERS RIGHTS AMENDMENT to the U.S. CONSTITUTION, known as "Article XXI"

Section 1. The Congress shall have power to establish uniform laws throughout the United States to regulate, limit, prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age; to limit the work and establish minimum compensation of wage earners; to provide for the relief of the aged, invalidated, sick and unemployed wage earners and employees in the form of periodical grants, pensions, benefits, compensations or indemnities, from the public treasury, from contributions of employers, wage earners and employees, or from one or more of such sources; to establish and take over natural resources, properties and enterprises in manufacture, mining, commerce, transportation, banking, public utilities, and other business to be owned and operated by the Government of the United States or agencies thereof for the benefit of the people, and the consumers.

Section 2. The power of the several states to enact social welfare legislation is unimpaired by this Article, that no such legislation shall abridge or conflict with any Act of Congress under the Article.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Conference call upon the Federal representatives and senators from this state to actively promote the fight for the immediate passage of this amendment. Be it Still Further Resolved that this Conference join with organized labor throughout the nation in the campaign for the adoption of the above Amendment.

Resolution #5 Negro Clergymen.

WHEREAS, we note with pleasure among the organized clergy an increasing liberal attitude and sympathetic concern with the economic and social plight of the people, and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of the Negro church parishioners are workers who earn their living from the sweat of their brow and from whose meager income the church derives its support, and

WHEREAS, the problems of the church are increased in proportion as the problems of the workers increase, and

WHEREAS, it is only along the lines of enlightened economic action can the problems of the people be ultimately solved and the stability and continued usefulness of the church to minister to the people's spiritual needs be assured, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that this Negro Labor Conference of Negro and white trade unionists hereby call upon all clergymen, Negro and white to devote at least one Sunday per month in consideration of the economic plight of their worker-parishioners with a new toward enlightening them to the efficacy of united economic action, and to encourage them to join bona fide trade unions as a means of advancing their economic and social interest.

Resolution #6 the Negro Press.

WHEREAS, it is an established fact that over 90% of the Negro population of the U.S. earn their living by working, and

WHEREAS, in the nature of American custom and tradition all Negro institutions--business, fraternal, and otherwise--of necessity depend upon the support of this 90% in order to maintain and develop, and

WHEREAS, the Negro press, with few exceptions, specializes in news and feature stories dealing with sports, theatricals, religion, and the lighter social activities of the Negro, without developing any definite policy competently and sympathetically dealing with the economic problems of Negro workers.

THEREFORE BE RESOLVED that this conference of Negro and white labor hereby call upon the Negro press to recognize its responsibility to Negro workers by supporting and encouraging the efforts of Negro workers to effect bona fide trade union organization to advance their economic and social interests.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this conference is happy to note the one outstanding Negro journal that is manifesting increasing interest and sympathy with the industrial and social-economic problems of the Negro workers is the New York Amsterdam News, and we hereby compliment the editor-publisher and employees of the said New York Amsterdam News for its attitude in these promises.

Resolution #7 The Int'l. Ladies Garment Workers Union.

WHEREAS, ever since its formation, thirty-five years ago, the Int'l. Ladies Garment Workers Union has taken a consistently high and socially enlightened position regarding Negro workers in particular and the problems of the workers in general, thereby establishing in the American labor movement a record that is unequalled and unique, and

WHEREAS, in line with this tradition, at its Convention in Chicago a year ago the Int'l. Ladies Garment Workers Union bravely assaulted the ogre of American race prejudice when the Convention proceedings were removed from the Medinah Club to Morrison Hotel because the Club's management objected to the Negro delegates to the convention,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Negro Labor Conference composed of Negro and white trade unionists congratulate the officers and members of the Int'l. Ladies Garment Workers Union upon its edifying example of labor solidarity--regardless of race, creed, color or nationality and hope that other labor units will emulate its example for the good of all labor.

Resolution #8 The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

WHEREAS, after 10 years of the most heroic struggle and sacrifice, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union has won the fight of the Pullman Porters and maids to self-organization and collective bargaining, and

WHEREAS, the fight of the Pullman Porters marks the first time in modern history that a group of Negro workers under Negro leadership successfully overcame the most cruel and relentless opposition of one of the nation's mightiest industrial and financial institutions, and by so doing contributed much to further discredit the iniquitous Company Unions,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Negro Labor Conference of Negro and white trade unionists congratulates the officers and members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and extend to them in their hour of success Fraternal Greetings and the hand of Fellowship.

May the victory of the Brotherhood encourage other workers, Negro and white, to organize and destroy Company Unions--the evil incarnate of modern industrial workers.

Resolution #9 The Workers' Unemployed Union.

WHEREAS, there exists in Harlem and in other parts of New York City hundreds of thousands of Negro workers who are unemployed and who exist on miserable relief, and

WHEREAS, the problem of organization and protection of the rights of the Negro worker is affected by this great unemployment problem, and

WHEREAS, President William Green of the A.F. of L. has urged all unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. to cooperate with the Workers Alliance of America of which the Workers Unemployed Union is the New York City affiliate.

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the assembled Negro and white trade unionists in this Conference urge the organization and full cooperation of the organized trade union movement in the organizing of the unemployed and relief workers of New York City into the Workers' Unemployed Union, to the end that the economic interests of Negro and white unemployed may be protected and advanced.

Resolution #10.

WHEREAS, this FIRST NEGRO LABOR CONFERENCE is the first in the history of the local labor movement to attempt to effect a permanent agency to assist the bonafide trade union movement in bringing into its support the full cooperation of both Negro and white labor.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the complete minutes and proceedings of this first Negro Labor Conference be sent to all local A.F. of L. unions represented in this Conference and if the funds permit to all local unions in Greater New York affiliated with the A.F. of L. and to all respective bodies representative of the A.F. of L.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the minutes and proceedings of this first Negro Labor Conference be read in the membership and executive board meetings of the respective local unions represented in this Conference.

Several Resolutions covering the following subjects were introduced from the floor:

Resolutions for "Freedom of Angelo Herndon," "Tom Meeney," and the "Scottsboro Boys." Resolution on "Organization of a Labor Party," "Against Fascism," and the "Ethiopian War Crisis."

Upon a motion, the Conference referred these resolutions to the Negro Labor Committee for appropriate action. A lengthy discussion ensued. After which, the Secretary of the Resolutions Committee introduced the following motion which was adopted.

Resolution #1 to Refer.

WHEREAS, no disagreement is anticipated upon the following resolutions on Freedom of Angelo Herndon, Tom Meeney, and the Scottsboro Boys, and For Organization of an Independent Labor Party, Against Fascism, and Ethiopian War Crisis,

BE IT RESOLVED that the mentioned resolutions be referred to the Negro Labor Committee for consideration and action.

Resolutions Committee.

Ivan Glasgow, Union Mechanics Assn.  
Murray Baron, Suitcase, Bag and Portfolio Workers Union.  
Edith Ransom, Dressmakers Union, Local #22, I.L.G.W.U.  
Lysa Sixto, Ladies Neckwearmakers Union, Local #142, I.L.G.W.U.  
Murray Gross, Dressmakers Union, Local #22, I.L.G.W.U.  
Clifford McLoed, Building Service Employers Union  
Norman Denawa, Dress and Waist Pressers Union, Local #60, I.L.G.W.U.

Brother Crosswaith then relinquished the chair to Brother Mirsky one of the elected Vice-Chairmen. A motion that the Conference adjourn for ten minutes was defeated.

At this juncture, Arnold Johnson, Fraternal delegate, representing the Emergency Home Relief Employees' Assn., gained the floor. He claimed that he was not invited but had applied as an organizer for participation in this conference. He also claimed that his organization was a bona fide organization recognized by the City Administration of New York in a collective bargaining agreement. He explained that he had had great difficulty in gaining admission to the Conference as a fraternal delegate. After paying the tax of \$1.00 which was the fee of all delegates from a bona fide union, although

his organization's application for affiliation had not been accepted by the A.F. of L. He charged the Conference with practicing discrimination.

Sister Gittons for the Credentials Committee explained that after quite a lengthy and disagreeable discussion at the door, at which time it had been explained to that particular delegate that only delegates from bona fide unions affiliated with the A.F. of L. would be able to vote, but fraternal delegates, i.e., organizations not affiliated with the A.F. of L. would be given the privilege to speak but not to vote.

The Chairman then called attention to the rules governing the Conference, which were read at the beginning of the Conference by the Convenor, and stated that if there was any unreadiness or disagreement with these rules, the time to have spoken was before their adoption. He then ruled the discussion "out of order."

Election of members of the Negro Labor Committee. In the absence of Brother Randolph, Brother Thomas Young of the Organization Committee presented a list of candidates to compose the Negro Labor Committee.

He explained that in going over the list, his Committee had tried to pick individuals who were available, and to take them from various trade unions. After reading the names, a motion was made that the submitted list be accepted. Upon unreadiness, various opinions were expressed. Some delegates claimed that nominees should be presented from the floor. Chairman Mirsky explained that the list submitted was only a suggestion to be voted upon, pro or con. Finally, Brother Mirsky, tabled the recommendations of Brother Young, and opened the floor for nominations to the Committee.

Before the nominees submitted from the floor were voted upon, Brother Mirsky, asked that as a point of personal privilege and respect to the Chairman of the Conference, Brother Crosswaith be given the opportunity to address the Conference.

Brother Crosswaith then spoke and in concluding presented the list of names with the explanation that when they decided to establish the committee they had carefully considered the available material with an eye to certain possibilities which the committee would have to face. In order to face these problems and overcome them, he felt that the committee should consist of persons who have had experience and training and who occupy strategic positions in the labor movement, as well as ability to handle labor problems.

After Brother Crosswaith's explanation, Mrs. Weissman, a delegate of the Women's Union Label Club of the Bronx was recognized, and spoke in part as follows:

"In view of Mr. Crosswaith's past and present interest, his wisdom shown in trying to solve the problems of labor, black and white, his undying efforts to gain emancipation for the laboring class from the teeth of the capitalist, I feel that we should show him the expression of our faith in him by accepting the list which he has presented. At the same time, I wish to express the good will of my union, and I promise all the support, morally or financially, which we might be able to render. In conclusion, I ask for the support of striking bakers in three stores located at 2794 Eighth Avenue, 639 Lenox Avenue, and 391 Lenox Avenue, where the Bakers' Union was trying to cooperate with the Negro workers in Harlem against efforts of an anti-union boss to destroy the Bakers' Union."

Brother Gross, a delegate from the Union also spoke on the issue of accepting Brother Crosswaith's nominations, and urged the others to do so.

Upon a motion, the list of names submitted by Brother Crosswaith was accepted by a vote of 54 to 11.

Following are the names of the members elected to the Negro Labor Committee:

Frank R. Crosswaith, Gen'l. Org., ILGWU and Chairman Harlem Labor Committee  
 A. Philip Randolph, President Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union  
 Thomas Young, Vice President Building Service Employees Union, 32-B  
 Julius Hochman, Vice President ILGWU, Gen'l. Mgr. Jt. Bd. Dressmakers Union  
 Abraham Miller, Exec. Sec'y. Jt. Bd. N.Y. Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union  
 Noah C. A. Walter, Jr., Secretary Harlem Labor Committee  
 Winifred Gittons, Blouse and Waistmakers Un. #25, ILGWU (Member Exec. Board)  
 Murray Baron, Mgr. Suitcase, Bag and Portfolio Workers Union  
 I. Laderman, President Int'l. Pocketbook Worker's Union  
 Clifford McLoed, Chairman Harlem Council Bldg. Serv. Employees Union, 32-B



Murray Gross, Bus. Agent Dressmakers Union, #22, ILGWU (Executive Bd.)  
 Wm. Alex. Conaway, American Federation of Musicians, #602, (Member Exec. Bd.)  
 Jack Butler, Taxi Chauffeurs Union, #19795, (Member Executive Bd.)  
 Joseph Machey, Int'l. Representative Int'l. Laundry Workers Union  
 Norman Donawa, Dress & Waist Pressers Un, #60, ILGWU (Member Executive Bd.)  
 Edward Richardson, Van Drivers and Helpers Union, #614, (Member Executive Bd.)  
 Edith Ransom, Dressmakers Union, #22, ILGWU (Member Executive Bd.)  
 B. F. McLauren, Nat'l. Org. Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union  
 Lysa Sixto, Ladies Neckwear Workers Union #142, ILGWU (Member Exec. Bd.)  
 P. A. Moore, Bus. Agent and Org. Dining Car Employees Union, #370  
 L. Levinson, Jt. Council Knit Goods Workers Union (Member Exec. Bd.)  
 Bertram Taylor, Bus. Agt. & Org. Union Mech. Assns., Vice Chmn. Harlem Labor  
 Committee  
 Jacob Mirsky, President Bricklayers Union, #37  
 Jack Wolheim, Motion Picture Operators Union, #306  
 Gordon Haynes, Pres. Union Mech. Assn., Mem. Exec. Bd. Carpenters & Joiners  
 Union, #1888.  
 Morris Feinstene, Exec. Secretary, United Hebrew Trades  
 Theodore Poston, N.Y. Newspaper Guild

After the election of the Committee, the relief worker, Arnold Johnson, again gained the floor and complained that he had been denied the right to vote since he was only a fraternal delegate. He accused the Committee of conducting the conference in a "gag fashion," and practicing discrimination. After a vituperative speech he left the conference with threats of a possible revolution.

Brother Crosswaith, who had resumed Chairmanship of the meeting, replied to him after which, Brother Abe Miller, General Secretary and Treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, was introduced and spoke as follows:

"I realize and appreciate the fact that you are all anxious to get out of here. So am I. If the Chairman had not announced before that he wanted me to say a few words, I probably would have been happier not to do so. However, before the conference is officially closed, I just want to say a few words. I came here today very happy to be present at a gathering where a movement is launched to organize the Negro workers. I am sorry, however, that some people came here with the idea that we were either organizing a political party or something else.

The remarks made a few moments ago, by the brother who thought he conquered God knows what, and about the "gag rule" that existed here, was terrible. I am sorry that this thing happened, but I am glad that we have enough constructive labor men here who understand their job, and their job is and will be to begin at the very foundation to teach the Negro workers the principles and fundamentals of Trade Unionism--for the time being--not anything else.

If I had been told that we were going to discuss anything else but to lay the foundation for an organization that would teach Negro workers Trade Unionism, I would not be here. I daresay, that would have been no calamity had I not been here. But I am glad a foundation was laid.

I do not want to take any more of your time except to say that my organization the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and myself, personally, have for a long time been very much interested in furthering labor organization among colored people. I have known Frank Crosswaith for fifteen years. I have known A. Philip Randolph for a long time. We have done everything we possibly could years ago to help organize colored workers. Whenever we speak of the Labor Movement of this country, we note that we are not sufficiently organized. Of the 40 million industrial workers only 10% to 15% are organized. If that is true of white workers, it is also true of colored workers who have been the weakest link in the American Labor Movement. Someone has said, "No chain is stronger than its weakest link." The Labor Movement is weakened by not having this strong, influential movement among colored people.

I am very happy to see that you have chosen a group of people who are interested in this movement. Despite the fact that they are busy with their own problems in their respective unions, they are willing to share and do everything to further this movement.

I am also happy that I am one of the Committee, but it would not have been a calamity if you had left me off. It seems some people clamored to be on that committee. I want to assure you that I have plenty to do outside of Harlem.

I would have been just as happy if you had left me off.

I am very glad you accepted Brother Crosswaith's suggestion. You do need people who have had some training and experience in Trade Unionism, and most important of all, people who are interested in this movement, not only names, but people interested in the Negro worker, and in all workers.

I want to congratulate you upon your good, sound judgment and desire to start a movement that will be beneficial to the colored workers of this country, and eventually to the entire Labor Movement to the extent that it will imbue them with the spirit of the Labor Movement. Only to that extent will real progress be made in the Trade Union of America, and future of the American people.

Let us roll up our sleeves, get down to the job, stop quibbling; but teach these exploited workers the fundamental and basic principles of labor action. I thank you!

The delegates then listened to a brief address by the Chairman in which he emphasized the historical significance of the Conference. He also paid tribute to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, for the moral and financial support they had given. Naming several members of Committees who had worked devotedly and efficiently to make the Conference a success, he thanked them and all the delegates for their cooperation.

The Conference was adjourned at 8 o'clock, with the delegates singing "Solidarity."

Negro Labor Committee Papers, Shomburg Collection, New York Public Library, New York.

#### THE COMMITTEE FOR INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION AND THE BLACK WORKER

#### 26. THE C.I.O. AND NEGRO LABOR

By Ernest Calloway

Since the early days of that small group of courageous Philadelphia cordwainers, who combined together to form the first American labor union, and more recently so, since the Emancipation Proclamation and the National Labor Union, the problem of Negro labor has consistently dominated the background of the whole movement of American labor.

It is not coincidental that the American labor movement was not able to gain status on a national scale until after the Civil War and the "freeing" of the slaves. The uneven development of American economy retarded the progress of any movement on the part of labor or potential labor. England, by comparison, having gone through all the regular processes of economic and industrial development, had a well established working class movement at the time the American working class formed their first union of national importance. American economy, at that time, operating within the confines of its agricultural base, was slowly going through an internal revolution. The continuous conflict of economic forces led to the social revolution, sometimes called the Civil War, which, if American history is viewed with greater perspective, was not an isolated conflict but merely a continuation of the social revolution of 1776. These revolutions were not confined to the American continent but similar ones had taken place in Europe, and in passing, had their origin there. All were the results of the sweeping tides of the Industrial Revolution and the new economic theories of the laissez-faire school. The rising middle class threw off the yoke of the landed aristocracy and in doing so, created a new and distinct class in world society, the wage earner.

After the Civil War and the submerging of the American landed aristocracy for a short period, the economic reorganization of the nation got under way. American economy shifted its agricultural base to a new industrial base and in the shifting process the Negro chattel slave became a wage earner and entered the competitive labor market. Thus with American economy established on its industrial base and the cessation of chattel slavery, the American labor movement, as we know it today, began its belated historical course.

William Sylvis, a moulder with convictions, dominated the National Labor<sup>138</sup> Union during its brief existence. He viewed the problem of Negro labor in its relationship to white labor with greater clarity and deeper insight than any of the future aspirants to the leadership of American labor. His contacts with progressive thought gave him the proper perspective to view the working class movement in its entirety and its future relationship to modern industrial society. Sylvis felt that if the Negro was excluded from the movement, or if no efforts were made to bring the Negro into the movement, it would result in the crumbling of the economic foundation of both the Negro worker and the white worker. The Negro worker, plagued with the usual array of self-styled Negro leaders who felt that economic determinism was of lesser importance than their political fortunes, was hog-tied to the conservative, monopoly conscious wing of the Republican Party. Thus at the legal birth of the American trade union movement, the Negro worker unconsciously aligned himself with the extreme forces of reaction, while organized labor in its toddling infancy groped in the dark for a solution to the newly created era of industrialization. The untimely death of William Sylvis and the subsequent disintegration of the National Labor Union left the American working class bankrupt as an organized social and economic force. This continued bankruptcy led American Labor into the swampy mysticism of the Knights of Labor.<sup>139</sup>

Ideologically the Knights of Labor was a revolt of the American petit bourgeoisie against the rapid spread of industrialization. It brought to light the first seeds of American middle-class decadence. The inclusion of professionals, shopkeepers, small manufacturers and their employees was a travesty on unionism. The present day opponents of industrial unionism often refer to the Knights of Labor's failure as an industrial organization failure. This contention is based on ignorance or an utter disregard of the historical development of American industry and economy. The very nature of the Knights of Labor's make-up and philosophy rendered it powerless to analyze the problem of Negro labor with any degree of realism. The utopian premise on which the Knights of Labor based its existence ran contrary to all the laws of dynamic social forces.

Out of this pell-mell of confusion emerged the craft conscious American Federation of Labor. Let it be said, that the philosophy of craft unionism, as such, with all its present day defects, represented a far more progressive philosophy of trade unionism during the historical period in which the American Federation of Labor was formed, than the fraternalism of the Knights of Labor. Yet this philosophy, for all practical purposes, soon found itself in daily conflict with the quickly changing industrial order. On practical application this circumscribed unionism not only excluded the mass of skilled and unskilled Negro labor but large sections of white labor as well. The theory of job control, going hand in hand with the organization of the select few highly skilled crafts, created a suicidal illusion within the minds of this select few. The illusion of aristocracy. The consequences of this illusion resulted in a blinding antagonism to any change in the structure of the American Federation of Labor, which was imperative if labor was to become an independent entity in our complex industrial organization.

The turn of the century also marked a decided turn in American economy. The Spanish-American war had been fought for the Hearst newspapers at the expense of the American taxpayer. The United States had begun an era of unprecedented financial expansion. American capitalism had entered the war-mongering stage of imperialism and its arch-deacon had been placed in the White House. The complete trustification of capital had submerged the farmer and small business man. Monopolization at home as well as abroad had artificially "povertyized" the large mass of native population as well as colonial population. The introduction of finance-capital gave banking control of industry. The search for sources of raw materials and the mad rush for world markets had created international competition. And the emergence of the assembly line of mass production in American industry had given greater

significance to the industrial union form of labor organization. Labor, as a commodity, felt the suffocating strangulation in the mad whirlpool of the changing composition of American capital. Thus American labor enters another historical period in the development of the trade union movement. A period in which the basic contradictions of an economic system had brought in to full view its glaring inequalities.

All past revolts, whether real or fancied, have been treated by the ordinary historian, with the flourish of the dramatic and a flair for romanticizing the whole era of historical change. These historians have had a greater desire to entertain their immediate readers than to make a convincing analysis for future posterity. This has been the prevailing attitude with the present day over-crowded field of newspaper commentators, mild labor historians and the non-labor "authority" on the working class movement. Their whole treatment and shallow evaluation of the present crisis within the American labor movement has resolved itself around the desires of two personalities, William Green and John L. Lewis. They see in William Green the stickler for tradition and see in John L. Lewis the reincarnation of Daniel DeLeon and "Big Bill" Haywood. And the movement for industrial unionism goes up with the wind, which has resulted in the uninformed, unorganized worker getting an untrue and warped picture of the state of affairs of organized labor.<sup>14b</sup>

To correct some of the misguided "legendized" conceptions of the Committee for Industrial Organization, it is necessary to review briefly the past fifty-five years of the American Federation of Labor and its efforts to organize the 30,000,000 American wage-earners. Although organized in 1881 it was not until 1896 that the A.F. of L. could claim a membership of 500,000 which was the result of an extensive organizational campaign pushed by Sam Gompers. This steady growth continued until 1913, and it reached a high mark of 2,700,000. Due to the war and stimulated by the government, the membership rose to approximately 5,000,000 between 1916-20. After the war membership declined to its 1913 mark. The A.F. of L. lost about 2,000,000 members in a short period of two years. In 1933 the membership of the A.F. of L. totaled 2,900,000. In twenty years the trade union movement had only gained 200,000 members. A twenty year period which is highly significant, for it was during this period that trustification of industry reached its peak.

The supporters of craft unionism are determined in their convictions that the craft type of organization will accomplish more in the long run and its practicability is far superior to that of any other method of organization. They also maintain, in the era of huge industrial combines, that the industrial union form of organization is merely a visionary panacea and the organization of the American worker is a slow process. They ask, why the sudden panic on the part of certain elements within the trade union movement? The craft unionists continue to revel in the fact that they restored trade unionism to the wage earner.

The issue of industrial unionism, based upon an analysis of industrial combinations, has been before the American trade union movement for almost a half century. Back in the '90s Sam Gompers and Daniel DeLeon fought tooth and nail on the same issue. DeLeon, highly versed in the industrial character of modern society but totally naive on the psychology of the American worker, formed the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance, which completely isolated the industrial union movement from the American worker. DeLeon's uncompromising hostility to the American Federation of Labor resulted in the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance becoming the small sectarian group for which it is remembered today, and ultimately labelled the industrial union movement with a tinge of "redness."

The Industrial Workers of the World, or commonly referred to as the "Wobblies," can trace the failure of their attempt to gain a lasting foothold in the trade union movement to the lack of a sound approach to the American worker. Although the activity of the I.W.W. enjoyed a certain measure of success among migratory workers for a short period, it was utterly devoid of trade union realism.

During the latter part of the 1920's, the Trade Union Unity League embarked upon its suicidal course of revolutionary dualism. Although the affiliates to the T.U.U.L. were industrial in character, the issue of industrial unionism, as such, was submerged in a maze of ill-advised revolutionary activity. Their only claim for existence was the mechanical transference of policies and program of the Red International of Labor Unions of which the T.U.U.L.

was not only an affiliate but whose policies and activities were dictated by the R.I.L.U. The T.U.U.L. failed to profit by the historical errors of the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance and the I.W.W., for it combined the mistakes of both organizations, which led to its disintegration, and isolation from the mainstream of American labor.

The above mentioned forces confined their activity, in the main, outside the American Federation of Labor. Within the Federation agitation for industrial unionism through the proper channels has been going on for a number of years. One union, outstanding for its progressiveness, has led a militant fight for the structural reformation of the A.F. of L., namely the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, which is semi-industrial in make-up but wholly industrial in outlook. Another union, recently admitted to the A.F. of L., the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, also joined in the agitation for industrial unionism. Both unions have been pillars of progress in the American labor movement for some time. During the NRA code hearings, the I.L.G.W.U., the A.C.W.A. and the United Mine Workers with the bulk of their industries strongly organized were more or less able to dictate their own terms to the code authorities, while workers in many other industries accepted the verdict of their combined employers.

At the San Francisco (1934) A.F. of L. convention, resolutions were adopted to the effect that the A.F. of L. would stimulate organization among the steel workers. (The code authority for the steel industry had been the American Iron and Steel Institute and still remains so, despite the death of the NRA). The union that felt the greatest pressure from the unorganized steel workers was the powerful industrial union, the United Mine Workers of America. This pressure on the organized miners was due to the close alliance of the coal industry to the steel industry. The captive coal mines of the steel industry have been and still remain a thorn in the side of the United Mine Workers. Its success as the spokesman for the American miner is constantly menaced by the unorganized steel workers. The resolution of the 1934 convention concerning the organization of the steel workers remained on paper throughout the ensuing year.

Atlantic City and the 1935 convention of the American Federation of Labor was a memorable convention. Its significance has been increased daily in view of the probability that it was the last convention of a unified trade union movement in America. At this convention a number of resolutions were introduced which revolved around the industrial-craft controversy such as craft unions "raiding" industrial unions for members (case of International Association of Machinists and the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union); settlement of jurisdictional disputes (case of the Brewery Workers and the Teamsters' Union); outright appeals to the convention for an industrial charter (case of the Automobile workers and the Radio workers); and hundreds of resolutions of a general nature on industrial unionism. Charles P. Howard of the Typographical Union made the minority report of the resolutions committee on the issue of industrial unionism and offered a motion for its adoption. After hours and hours of debate the motion was defeated by a vote of approximately 11,000 to 18,000. This 11,000 represented the largest vote the industrial union forces had received in the whole history of the A.F. of L.<sup>141</sup>

Later John L. Lewis resigned from the Executive Council in protest against the Council's policies toward the steel organization campaign. Thereupon the U.M.W.A., I.L.G.W.U., A.C.W., U.T.W., the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union and the Cap and Millinery Union formed the Committee for Industrial Organization. Its object at first was educational, but with the conclusion of the recent convention of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, it was indicated that the activity would not be confined strictly to agitation but concrete plans would be made to organize the mass production industries. The suspension of the C.I.O. unions by the Executive Council of the A.F. of L. was one of the most flagrant violations of trade union democracy in the entire history of the labor movement.

With the Committee for Industrial Organization unequivocally committed to a definite stand on industrial unionism, and well on its way, let us turn to the problem of Negro labor in its relationship to industrial unionism. Many students of labor problems contend that industrial unionism holds the solution to many of our present day social and economic ills. These practical students should not make the mistake of becoming "panacea conscious." Upon a searching analysis of many of these social and economic ills, this may be a far too sweeping statement. And to continue making such long-range statements makes it

difficult to maintain that healthy required equilibrium for examining social and economic defects. Of course, one of the important assets of industrial unionism, many will agree, is that it has the necessary factors towards the creation of a great labor compactness among the many racial working groups.

With this theoretical premise, let us make a practical examination of the attitude towards the Negro worker of some of the unions that form the C.I.O.

1-UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA--With a membership of 500,000 it is the largest union in the country. Its racial composition is varied. Native whites, Negroes, Italians, Welsh, Hungarians and many other national groups. Everyone is admitted to the union on a basis of complete equality. The West Virginia coal fields probably constitute the largest Negro membership in the U.M.W.A. West Virginia is strongly organized with the possible exception of Logan County, Kentucky has a large Negro membership and is strongly organized with the possible exception of Harlan County, Alabama, Virginia and Tennessee have large Negro memberships. Throughout all the locals leadership is proportionately divided between Negro and white miners. West Virginia has probably made the greatest contribution to the cause of Negro-white unionism. In the U.M.W.A. the racial question is submerged by a greater desire to keep their economic declaration of independence constantly before the combined financial interest of the coal industry.

2-INTERNATIONAL LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION--With a membership of 225,000, it is the second largest union in the C.I.O. group. This is predominantly Jewish and Italian, with a number of Negroes and other nationalities. With the exception of one local (Local 89, which is the Italian local and is based on a language difference and not a racial difference) all are admitted also on a basis of complete equality. Local 22, under the guiding spirit of the militant Charles S. Zimmerman, has become the most progressive single local in the entire labor movement. With a membership of 30,000 including every racial group (with the exception of the Italians) in the New York City dress industry, it forms a model in unionism. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union has been in the forefront of American labor in working out the solution of the Negro--white labor problem. This is done through extensive workers' education program under the leadership of Fania M. Cohn and Mark Starr.

3-AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS OF AMERICA--Membership 150,000. This union has a well defined attitude towards the Negro worker similar to that of the I.L.G.W.U. The bulk of the men's clothing industry is located in northern metropolitan areas and the number of Negroes in the industry is very small. This union, last year in Norfolk, Va., made history in the field of race relations in its conduct of the organizational drive on the Finkelstein Co., which employed a large number of Negroes as well as white workers. The Amalgamated campaign among the Negroes, under the capable leadership of George Streater, assisted by Tom Dabney, and among the white workers, the crack A.C.W.A. organizers, Edith Christensen, Elizabeth (Zilla) Hawes and Hilda Cobb, resulted in bringing together the two groups, which astounded the staid community of Norfolk and the feat was recognized as the best achievement in the field of race relations during the year of 1935.

4-UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS--Membership 79,200. This union, although conducting one of the most militant strikes in trade union history--the 1934 general textile strike--has not been as praise-worthy in handling the Negro-white problem as the above mentioned unions. The Textile industry formerly located in New England but of late a large section has moved South to escape unionization of its employees in the north; also the attractive financial inducements offered by city councils and chambers of commerce in southern communities have been important factors in the shift, without mentioning the guarantee of cheap contented labor. The textile industry for years has been considered the "sick man of American industry." It has for many years thrived on government subsidization. As the industry has been the "sick man," the textile union has been the problem child of American trade unionism. In the South where attempts have been made to organize Negroes and whites, the union has given way to local prejudices, which resulted in the creation of separate locals. Of course, any one can see that the move is self-protective, which is very good argument from the organization point of view, but it does not bring us closer to the goal of creating a healthy labor solidarity on the part of Negro and white textile workers. Another organization in the South that has to contend with the same type of psychology and prejudices has been able to

break through this wall with a great degree of success. An outstanding example is the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, under the courageous leadership of Howard Kester, McKinney, H. L. Mitchell and hundreds of other valiant Negro and white share-croppers. Another organization needs mentioning in its struggle for southern labor solidarity, the southern committee of the Workers' Alliance, led by two southerners, Hilliard Bernstein of Virginia and Dave Benson of Florida; and not forgetting the "missionary" work of the Highlander Folk School and those militant "missionaries," Miles Horton, Jim Dombrowski and Zilla Hawes.<sup>1+2</sup>

5-UNITED AUTOMOBILE WORKERS--Membership 80,000. This union is the "baby" union of the A.F. of L.-C.I.O., only receiving an international charter about two years ago. All the other unions we have discussed had something to offer the Negro in the form of protection against wage slavery by reason of their strength and long experience in the labor movement, but with the automobile workers the Negro has a chance to repay that debt. He has the opportunity to make a wonderful contribution to the trade union movement. In discussing the previous unions, we have discussed the attitude of the union towards the Negro. The table turns. We shall discuss the attitude of the Negro towards the union. Ernest Rice McKinney, Negro organizer for the Steel Workers Committee, wrote quite correctly when he commented on the reluctance of Negro steel workers joining the steel union. The statement could be applied to every unorganized Negro worker in the country. He said, "Some day Negro steel workers may allege that an organized steel union has passed them over in the selection of officers and organizers, or they may complain that the union is not paying enough attention to the matter of protecting Negroes from the onslaughts of the company. But these complainants will have to ask themselves what had been their attitude towards the union. Did they join in the early days of the union, help build it, make sacrifices, pay their dues promptly and participate loyally in the union struggles? Or did they hang back and let the white workers make all the sacrifices, do all the hard work, take the knocks and render all the services to the union? In other words, will Negro steel workers, after the union has been built up, *still be demanding that they get something for nothing*" (*italics mine, E.C.*). This, in no uncertain terms, reminds the writer of the attitude of the bulk of Negro automobile workers in the Buick plant at Flint, Mich. There the local union has offered every inducement possible to the Negro auto worker, electing two Negroes to the local executive board. These two Negroes were actually condemned by the Negro community for betraying the race and the Buick company. In Cleveland, during the auto strike of 1935 at the Chevrolet plant, not a single Negro face was seen in the auditorium of the metal trades council during the many strike meetings. In Cleveland again, during the strike of the Battery Workers, a picket line had formed around the plant. A few Negroes coming to work tried to break through the line and were begged to get in the picket line and join the strike but to no avail. They kept a sharp eye on the front window of the boss's office. These irresponsibilities on the part of Negro workers will not further the cause of unionism. This attitude towards unionism must be changed if Negroes are going to seek admission to unions on a basis of complete equality. The Negro Workers' Councils of the Urban League, under the progressive and sincere leadership of Lester B. Granger, has the possibilities of becoming an instrument through which the Negro worker could be made more trade union conscious and the development of the sense of responsibility that is required towards the building of a strong labor movement.

6-AMALGAMATED ASSOCIATION OF IRON, STEEL AND TINWORKERS--Present membership unknown. This union is in the midst of a rebirth. Its past attitude towards the Negro has been one of vacillation, if not open disregard to the problem of the Negro steel worker. Today under the leadership of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee of the C.I.O. its policies and structure have been changed completely. The attitude of the S.W.O.C. towards the Negro really needs no discussion. The Committee is waging one of the greatest campaigns in the history of the labor movement to bring the steel worker into the union. A number of Negro organizers have been put in the field to work among Negro steel workers, and it is another case of the attitude of the Negro towards unionization. The S.W.O.C. is planted deep in the soil of progressive traditions of American trade unionism, and with its present rate of success the steel workers union is destined to become the base of the future trade union movement.

This discussion of the attitude of industrial and semi-industrial unions toward the Negro, finds itself pushed to the background, on examining the economic gains of industrial unionism and its general tendency to break down the wide gap in living standards between many white workers and Negro workers. It is agreed that the very nature of industrial unionism makes it possible for the Negro to enter the union on a footing of equality with that of his fellow white worker, which paves the way to destroy that vicious system used by employers of playing one racial group against the other, through wage differentials. From this point it is possible to bring the standard of living of the Negro worker, as it compares to that of the white worker, out of the theoretical realm of abstraction, and into the field of practical economics of the every day bread and butter variety.

In discussing living standards, one must necessarily consider two important factors, monetary wages and real wages. One is the amount of money a worker receives for the sale of a given amount of labor power. The other is the amount of goods (food, clothing, shelter, education, insurance and amusements) the worker is able to purchase for the amount of labor power sold. Of the two, the real wage determines the living standard. The solution to the problem of the real wage lies in independent political mass action on the part of labor, which we are not discussing at this point but will be discussed in a future article.

*Opportunity*, (November, 1936): 326-30.

## 27. INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM AND THE NEGRO

By Lester B. Granger

By his brilliant speech at the last convention of the American Federation of Labor, his subsequent sponsorship of the Committee for Industrial Organization, and the dramatic coup which brought his resignation as Vice President of the American Federation of Labor, John L. Lewis has assumed the driver's seat on the band-wagon of industrial unionism and has captured the American public's imagination with his direct and savage attack on the time-worn craft union machinery of the A.F. of L.

Many Negro leaders, seeing advantage to Negro workers inherent in his program, have shown great alacrity in climbing on the Lewis band-wagon in the hope that the new movement spells the end of political maneuvers which have thus far kept Negroes out of many bodies of organized labor. In fact, some racial enthusiasts have gotten out on the road in advance of the band-wagon and are jubilantly rushing toward what they assume to be a new day for Labor and a new organization to take the place of the A.F. of L. There is grave danger that such premature adulation might still further confuse the issues involved in the Negro's fight for union protection, and might obscure in a cloud of "racialism" the best interests of a considerable portion of black labor.

Most progressive students of the American labor scene are in agreement, it is true, with the position of Lewis. They are convinced that the best interests of workers in modern industry can no longer be adequately protected by the old-fashioned craft type of organization that groups workers according to their particular craft skills without regard to the industry in which they are employed. This type of union, critics declare, had its origin in the early days of the labor movement, long before the gigantic corporate structure of organized and interlocking industries had come into being, and it now outmoded.

John L. Lewis, by virtue of his position as President of the United Mine Workers of America, the nation's largest union, has for over fifteen years been a dynamic and imposing figure among the labor leaders of the country. He is a brainy man, with an instinct which amounts to pure genius for keeping his finger on the pulse of labor's rank and file. He has tremendous political skill and possesses also an actor's flare for the dramatic, coupled with a gift of oratory unsurpassed in public today. His militant leadership of the industrial union forces caught public attention in 1934, gathered momentum at the



1935 convention, and has rushed into full swing during the past few weeks, bringing him into the limelight to such a degree that beyond all question he is at the moment the greatest single figure in the American labor movement.

It is not hard to see the advantages for black workers in the spread of the industrial union idea with its traditions of inclusiveness instead of exclusiveness because of race, and its greater concern for the organization of unskilled workers. It is natural and helpful for Negro leadership to endorse the position of Mr. Lewis and to pledge cooperation in carrying forward the program of the Committee for Industrial Organization. The danger which has been referred to above lies in the possibility that the enthusiasm of Negro leaders for the "new crusade" may cause them to close behind them doors of approach which have previously been open and alienate friends who have been steadfast in their support of the Negro's right to be admitted into the trade union movement. It can be too easily a case of "off with the old love, on with the new."

After all, Mr. Lewis is still a member of a union which is part of the American Federation of Labor, as is true of the other members of the Committee for Industrial Organization. Mr. Lewis being likewise a very clever political strategist, has not the slightest intention of sacrificing his position as an A.F. of L. leader until definite advantage can be shown in splitting away from America's most important labor group. Such advantage is not apparent at the present time. As long as the Committee for Industrial Organization is a body within the A.F. of L., it will respect Federation procedures and conventions. It is possible for Negroes to get too far out in front of the band-wagon, and find that the parade has changed its line of march behind them without their knowing it.

Moreover, while Mr. Lewis has made emphatic public declarations against racial discrimination in unions, and while his Committee includes the heads of some of the most liberal of our international unions, there is no clear-cut pro-Negro or anti-Negro issue involved in the struggle between industrial and craft unions. It is not merely a case of separating the sheep from the goats, for there are a good many sheep remaining on the side of the craft-union forces, while in the ranks of the industrial unionists there may be found a few suspiciously goat-like individuals.

Organized labor may be forgiven for remaining skeptical regarding the value of any assistance that traditional Negro leadership may give, for the past attitude of the race's intellectuals has been lukewarm on the matter of Negro membership in unions. Their protest against racial discrimination by unions has been vociferous, but due more to race pride than to economic urge. Few racial organizations have sought to impress black workers with the need for joining even those unions without color prejudice. The failure of Negro workers to organize has been partly due to hostility in some unions, but it has been even more due to apathy on the part of Negroes themselves. As an official of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter says, "There's no color bar in the Brotherhood, but even so it was a ten-year struggle for us to get most of the porters in."

In short, the present conflict between industrial and craft union forces does not in the slightest degree alter the essential task for Negro leadership --which is to impress upon black labor the need for independent, worker-controlled organization, and the necessity for cooperation between white and Negro workers in the same crafts, the same industries, whether in craft or industrial unions. This objective will not be gained by communications or protests addressed to William Green, to John L. Lewis, or to any other of organized labor's hierarchy. It will be gained through a long-time, patient and heart-breaking program of workers' education such as is being carried on by the Negro Workers' Councils throughout the country, the Harlem Labor Committee in New York City, and workers' education classes which a few enlightened leaders are sponsoring elsewhere.

Simultaneously, for this program to be effective, there must be carried on a similar educational work among white workers, by leaders of both races. It is idle for Negroes to believe in and practice interracial cooperation between workers unless they can find whites who are willing to reciprocate. The most enlightened unions have recognized this fact, chief among them Lewis's own U.M.W.A. and the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union. The miners, with Negroes composing at one time forty per cent of their membership and still represented with a larger enrollment than any other union, have a number of

Negro organizers and officers in mixed membership locals. In time of labor crisis and union action, there is never any question of whipping up Negroes' support or of guaranteeing the whites' cooperation. All that is taken for granted in a union which has "come up the hard way," where black and white men have fought together, have starved together, and have been shot down together in their struggle for a security in America's most cut-throat industry.

This is the lesson which the I.L.G.W.U. is assiduously teaching its members through its educational department with Mark Starr, Fannia Cohn, and similar veterans of the trade union movement. It is a lesson which has not yet been absorbed by several industrial unions with large Negro memberships. The United Textile Workers have 10,000 dark-skinned members, but the union has made no serious effort to attack a situation where Negroes are confined to rough laboring and poorly paid jobs for the most part, even though union members. By the manner in which unions of textile, tobacco, oil and petroleum workers, and similar bodies of industrially organized labor face this race question, Negroes in industry will judge the effectiveness and good faith of the industrial union movement. In laying the groundwork for its program, it is to be hoped that the Committee for Industrial Organization will not overlook this excellent chance to enlist the support of America's ninth worker--to build for industrial democracy.

*Opportunity*, 14 (January, 1936): 29-30.

28. "PLAN ELEVEN"--JIM-CROW IN STEEL

By John P. Davis

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*The Crisis*, 43 (September, 1936): 262-63, 276.

### 29. LABOR

By T. Arnold Hill

The year 1937 comes in on a wave of industrial acceleration. There can be no doubt about it, for profits are advancing, sales increasing, capital expenditures expanding, retail sales mounting, and real estate prices rising. Wages are higher and salary bonuses are being granted. Perhaps the surest index, one that is usually a barometer of good or normal times, is the mounting number of strikes. When business is good, and more especially when prices go up, wages do not rise in equal proportion. As a consequence, labor unions bargain for higher wages and union recognition. Failing to receive them, they issue strike orders which are usually followed. At the present time, several of the industries employing large numbers of workers either have strikes or are threatened with them. Such is the case with the steel, automobile, textile, and transportation industries--the last named menaced on land and sea, and in the air.

The nation's 1937 labor struggle will be beset with new factions, factors and techniques. Prominent will be the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), headed by John L. Lewis, attacking the orthodox American trade-union movement controlled by the American Federation of Labor (A.F. of L.), with William Green at the head. Technically, this is a dispute involving two old theories--craft unions and industrial unions--which has been settled in European countries on the side of industrial unions. The situation here is complicated because personalities are at loggerheads. The miners, now following Lewis, have withdrawn the dominant force of their 500,000 members from the A.F. of L. As to techniques, there is the "sit down" strike, the "lie down" strike, and mass picketing, in addition to the common forms of revolt workers have practiced heretofore.

Thus, while the automobile companies are producing 220,000 cars daily, they are being threatened with what may be the most serious strike in their entire history. Unions of glass workers have already stopped 85 per cent of the production of plate glass for motor cars. The transportation workers, with the seamen forming the spear-head of revolt, have tied up shipping on both the West and East Coasts. Railroads and municipal transportation systems are likewise having their difficulties.

Several new factors are behind labor's campaign. While the nation's workers still demand shorter hours and larger wages, they are today more insistent upon union recognition and closed shop agreements. The orthodox labor unions have been reinforced by organizations of white collar and professional workers--writers, artists, engineers, social workers--who are bringing to labor relations a factual and intelligent approach to a degree that has not been noticeable before.

Again, the spirit of the defunct NRA still lives with a number of private industries which have not abandoned the principle of agreement with workers and plans for stabilization of output; to say nothing of the Labor Relations Board and the National Mediation Board, which have given heart and courage to the protests of workers everywhere. Unquestionably, the aggressiveness of John L. Lewis's CIO, the unrevealed force behind the seamen's strike, and the leader of the union activity of steel workers and miners and glass workers, is a new influence which will lend impetus to the ceaseless struggle between capital and labor in the year 1937.

There are knotty problems too, for an economist to explain to a tired nation, if it is actually to be lifted up to its 1929 level. There are paradoxes galore in a recovery so certain and so sure while unemployment, equally certain and sure, is not receding in line with the advance industry is making. No reliable estimate of unemployment has placed the figure below seven million,

and most estimates are above eight million. Money piles up in banks because investment possibilities are not available. Interest rates are still low, and surpluses are running high, perhaps too high.

The much mooted question as to the actual cause of unemployment is still to be answered. And until this is answered, there can be no agreed policy to prevent it. There is perhaps as much difference of opinion as to the validity of popular theories of stabilization and prosperity as there was in 1930. There are still those who wonder whether or not the upward trend in business will not again recede to the depths of '32 and '33 when it reaches the heights attained in 1929. The question is not yet answered as to how far prosperity can advance in a competitive economy without at the same time ushering in a depression.

We go into 1937, with a more optimistic outlook. Among the employing group there is less hostility toward the interests of wage-earners. Indeed, in some circles, there is a friendliness and a willingness to see eye to eye with the laboring group. We shall have social security in many forms and in many states, so that the future of American workers need not now be as hopeless as it once was. The United States Chamber of Commerce has indicated its willingness to liberalize its policies. In all, 1937 promises to be a good year industrially and economically. Business will be good--so good that labor will want its share of it-- and so good that industry should have a good disposition to improve upon its past unworthy performance. It will not be so good, however, that vigilance can be relaxed, or aggressive action withheld. There are few people so optimistic as to believe that labor can yet desist from its continuous watchfulness and insistence.

The issues for the ensuing year will engage the attention of all elements of society. The happenings of the past six years have served to emphasize the unavoidable relationship between industry and every other aspect of our national life. So great has been the loss of position and the destruction of incomes deemed impregnable, that every element of our citizenship has had its interest in human values quickened. Our structure for human welfare in 1937 will not rest on grants to the poor by private organizations. The public must pay for the failure of our economic society, and the public will want to know why the bill is so high. Thus it will be the public's business to look for causes deeper than surface formation.

*Opportunity*, 15 (January, 1937): 25,29.





## NOTES AND INDEX



## NOTES

- 1 For background on W. E. B. Du Bois, see Vol. IV, note 136.
- 2 For background on the Ku Klux Klan, see Vol. II, pp. 183-239.
- 3 For the East St. Louis Riot, see Vol. V, pp. 284-332.
- 4 For a definition of peonage, see p. 397.
- 5 James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2 vols. (New York, 1895).
- 6 Charles S. Johnson (1893-1956) first gained recognition through his co-authored *The Negro in Chicago* (1922), a landmark in social research. In 1947 he became the first black president of Fisk University and continued in that position for the remainder of his life. He held many other influential positions at the local and national level, and authored numerous books and articles, such as the *Negro in American Civilization* (1930), *Shadow of the Plantation* (1934), and *Growing Up in the Black Belt* (1941).
- 7 Born in Providence, Rhode Island, George S. Schuyler (b. 1895) for many years served as writer for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. He also wrote numerous magazine articles and two novels, *Black No More* and *Slaves Today!* Schuyler also wrote *Racial Inter-marriage in the United States*, and *Black and Conservative* (1966), his autobiography.
- 8 Ira De A. Reid (b. 1901) received an A.B. from Morehouse College, an M.A. from the University of Pittsburgh, and the Ph.D. from Columbia University (1929). An exceptional sociologist, he taught at the university level, and became prominent as a result of his excellent social studies. He has served as a consultant to numerous governmental agencies, as director of research for the Urban League, and published numerous scholarly works.
- 9 William Butterworth, "What Canadian Business is Doing," 17 (December, 1928): 80.
- 10 For background on T. Arnold Hill, see Vol. V, note 135.
- 11 Broadus Mitchell, (b. 1892) economic historian and educator, received his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1918. He taught at Johns Hopkins, Rutgers University, Occidental College, and Hofstra before retiring in 1967. Mitchell wrote a number of books, including the *Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* (1921), *William Gregg* (1928), and *The Industrial Revolution in the South* (1930).
- 12 For background on the National Negro Business League, see Vol. V, note 23.
- 13 For background on Asa Philip Randolph, see Vol. V, note 111.
- 14 The "Black Death of the Middle Ages" refers to the most virulent epidemic of bubonic plague recorded in human history which spread over Europe 1347 and 1350. Successive outbursts followed every few years thereafter for three centuries.
- 15 Binga State Bank of Chicago was founded by Jesse Binga who built his banking empire by using his wife's inheritance to invest in real estate. The bank survived only about twenty-five years (1908-1932), finally forced to close its doors in the midst of the Depression.
- 16 James J. Davis (1873-1947) was born in Wales and emigrated with his parents to Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1881. He was apprenticed as a puddler in the steel mills at age 11. Eventually, Davis rose to become president of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers of America. A Republican, he was appointed Secretary of Labor by President Harding in

1929. He resigned from office in 1930 following his election to the U. S. Senate as a Republican from Pennsylvania. He was elected again in 1933 and 1939. He lost his bid for the Senate in 1944.
- 17 The "Big Four" railroad unions consisted of the brotherhoods of firemen, trainmen, conductors, and engineers. See Vol. IV, pp. 85-114, and Vol. V, pp. 198-224.
- 18 For background on Kelly Miller, see Vol. V, note 4. Miller was a vocal advocate of a "Negro Sanhedrin," or a broad coalition of civil rights groups which would meet regularly in convention to act in unison for Negro rights.
- 19 Emma Alice Margaret (Margot) Asquith, Countess of Oxford and Asquith (1864-1945), was interested in the lives of factory girls and visited a factory of women workers in Whitechapel whenever she was in London. She wrote that she "derived as much interest and more benefit from visiting the poor than the rich and I get on better with them." She was drawn more to intellectual than political affairs and counted numerous writers as friends. In 1894 she married Herbert Henry Asquith, a leader of the Liberal party.
- 20 Stuart Chase (b. 1888) graduated from Harvard University in 1910 and served with the Federal Trade Commission and a labor organization for economic research. Among his numerous studies published between 1925 and 1960 are *The Tragedy of Waste* (1925), *The Economy of Abundance* (1934), *A Primer of Economics* (1941), and *Live and Let Live* (1960).
- 21 The National Industrial Recovery Act (1933) was designed to revive industrial and trade activity during a period of severe business depression. The National Recovery Administration, established under the act, gave the president the power to prescribe codes for industries in order to stabilize prices, spread employment, and raise wages. The NRA eventually broke down under its own weight and the Supreme Court destroyed it by undermining its legal foundations on the ground that the Act invaded states' rights.
- 22 For background on Eugene Kinkle Jones, see Vol. V, note 87.
- 23 Frances Perkins (1882-1965), an authority on industrial hazards and hygiene, fought for more comprehensive factory laws and for maximum-hour laws for women. She became the first woman cabinet member when President Franklin Roosevelt appointed her Secretary of Labor (1933-1945), and gained respect for skillfully administering its vastly increased duties under the New Deal.
- 24 Henry Allen Bullock (1907-1973), black educator, author, and authority on Afro-American life, taught at various universities. The last years of his career were spent at the University of Texas, Austin, during which time he won the Bancroft Prize (1968) for his *History of Negro Education in the South from 1619 to the Present*.
- 25 Robert C. Weaver (b. 1907), economist and public servant, became an adviser on Negro affairs in the Department of the Interior (1933-1937) and eventually rose to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Lyndon Johnson. He was the first black to be appointed to the White House Cabinet.
- 26 The editorial appeared in the *Macon (Ga.) Telegraph*, August 5, 1933.
- 27 The "Wall Street Debacle" (1929) was the worst stock market and financial crash in the nation's history. Every field of business suffered huge losses, and the Great Depression which was to last a decade set in. Exports and imports fell off sharply and unemployment rose to an estimated seventeen million. Presidential orders and various banking acts gradually restored solvency but the nation's economy did not fully recover until the advent of World War II.

- 28 Gustav Peck, a National Recovery Administration official on the Labor Advisory Board, advised against a national minimum wage because it would hurt black workers. Blacks remained unconvinced.
- 29 John P. Davis, a young black Harvard Law School graduate, was an attorney in Washington, D.C. He and Robert Weaver formed the Negro Industrial League in 1933 to advocate the integration of blacks in the New Deal. Out of this organization grew the Joint Committee on National Recovery, a coalition of twenty-two major Negro organizations founded in 1935 to continue the effort to eliminate racial discrimination in the New Deal, with Davis as its secretary. Davis also served as organizer-secretary of the National Negro Congress founded in 1935. See also, pp. 446-52.
- 30 The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) was created by act of Congress in 1933 to raise commodity prices, reduce overproduction of farm crops, and to elevate the income of farmers. In 1936 the Supreme Court declared the act an unconstitutional intrusion into states rights. A second act passed in 1938 authorized the AAA to establish a system of crop insurance and parity payments to regulate farm production.  
The Public Works Administration (PWA) was established under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 to stimulate employment through the construction of roads, public buildings, and other projects. The Supreme Court also ruled the NIRA was unconstitutional.
- 31 For background on the Dred Scott decision, see Vol. IV, note 81.
- 32 Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was born in Jamaica and apprenticed to learn the printer's trade. He came to the U.S. in 1916 and established his race organization in Harlem. The Universal Negro Improvement Association won millions of followers, although the exact number is disputed, on a platform of race pride, the development of an independent black nation in Africa, and the control of the economic and political life of black communities in America. Garvey started all-black businesses such as the Black Star Line, a shipping enterprise funded by black stockholders. The movement disintegrated after Garvey was jailed in 1925 for mail fraud. His sentence was commuted in 1927 and Garvey was deported. Garvey started the first real mass movement among Afro-Americans, and his influence has continued to the present day. Garvey died poverty-stricken in London, England, 1940.
- 33 Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891), an Irish Nationalist, was educated at Cambridge and entered Parliament in 1875. He gathered a band of Irish Home Rule members for the purpose of obstruction in the House of Commons. His bitter obstruction of the Coercion Bill and the Land Act led to his temporary arrest and imprisonment. By 1886 Parnell's Irish Nationalists held the balance of power in the Commons, and forced Gladstone to form a ministry on the basis of Home Rule to Ireland. Parnell made a triumphal tour of the U.S. in 1880 and was invited to address the House of Representatives.  
For background on William Howard Taft, see Vol. V, note 25.  
For Samuel Compers, see Vols. IV and V *passim*.
- 34 The Chicago Commission on Race Relations was created in the wake of the 1919 riot which convulsed that city for several days. Its purpose was to study the causes of the riot and to make recommendations for preventing further violence. The Commission's most long lasting contribution was a study published in 1922. That report is reproduced in part in Vol. V, pp. 333-41. For the riot, see Vol. V, pp. 333-65.
- 35 Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization; a Study of Negro and Race Relations in the Light of Social Research* (New York, 1930).
- 36 Richard T. Ely, *Outlines of Economics* (New York, 1893). Many subsequent editions were published.  
Frank T. Carlton, *Organized Labor in American History* (New York, 1920).

- 37 Matthew Carey (1760-1839), publisher and economist, immigrated to Philadelphia from Ireland in 1784. The firm Carey & Lea became a leading publishing house. Retiring from business in 1819, Carey organized the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry, and advocated the "American System" championed by Henry Clay to promote industry. Carey also was involved in social reform issues.
- 38 For the American Negro Labor Congress, see pp. 436-45.
- 39 For background on Sojourner Truth, see Vol. II, note 86.
- 40 The Communist Party established Unemployed Councils of Negroes and whites to demand relief funds. Frequently they organized marches and demonstrations in order to command the attention of local officials to the plight of the unemployed.
- 41 For background for Frank R. Crosswaith, see p. 506, and note 135.
- 42 For the National Negro Labor Congress, see pp. 446-52.
- 43 Ashley L. Totten (1884-1963) was born in St. Croix, Virgin Islands, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1905. Eventually he became a Pullman porter, and in 1925 was one of the principal founders of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The Pullman Co. fired him for his efforts and he became an organizer for the Brotherhood, and then, in 1930, the union's secretary-treasurer, serving in that capacity for more than thirty years.  
William H. Des Verney had been with the Pullman Co. for many years and was near retirement in 1924 when he was one of the original three who recruited A. Philip Randolph to become general organizer for the new union of porters. In fact, the details were worked out in his home in New York. He was fired from his position of organizer in 1928 because of a feud among the New York branch members.
- 44 Robert L. Mays founded the Railway Men's Benevolent Association to serve as an industrial type union for black railroad employees denied admission to the unions of their craft. The union grew out of the favorable atmosphere of World War I when the U.S. government sought to achieve stability in the labor market by recognizing unions. Prior to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, union porters belonged to Mays' association. By 1924, however, Mays had decided against a vigorous campaign among the porters. In January 1926 Mays resigned from the BSCP in a public letter printed in the *Chicago Defender*. The letter demonstrated the schism over strategy within the newly founded brotherhood. For further background on Mays, see pp. 294-302. See also, Vol. V, note 95.  
For background on Chandler Owen, see Vol. V, note 110.  
Milton P. Webster (b. 1887) came to Chicago from Clarksville, Tennessee, as a young man to work as a porter. By 1925 he exercised some influence in black Republican politics as a ward leader and retained the friendship of Chicago's leading black politicians, Oscar De Priest. Because he had important political connections, and many personal friends among the porters, Webster became the second most important figure in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.
- 45 Robert W. Dunn, author and executive secretary of the Garland Fund, published *Company Unions* (New York, 1927). One chapter assesses the Pullman Company's Employee Representation Plan and the efforts of the Sleeping Car Porters to displace it.
- 46 *The New Leader* is a democratic-socialist weekly labor newspaper published in New York.
- 47 Roy Lancaster was one of the original New York porters who recruited Randolph in 1925 to become general organizer. Pullman fired him that year for his union activities. He became the BSCP secretary-treasurer serving from 1925 to 1930, and also filled the role of business manager for *The Messenger*. Lancaster offended the Chicago porters, especially Milton Webster who accused him of dishonesty. By the 1930 convention, Webster

had convinced enough people of that that his opinion was correct to deny Lancaster reelection and he retired from the union.

- 48 Morris ("Dad") Moore was a retired porter of Oakland, California. By openly advocating unionism, he jeopardized his job as a caretaker of two sleeping cars in which laid-over porters slept. Although he drank too much, the porters respected him for his vitality and nerve and because of his steadfast loyalty to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The Pullman Co. fired him from his part-time job, but he opened his own sleeping quarters to compete with that of the company. Pullman then cancelled his paltry fifteen dollars per month pension in an attempt to crush his union organizing. He died in January 1930.
- 49 Mary Mc Dowell (1854-1936) was a director of Chicago's Hull House and a tireless social reformer who frequently stood as a conciliator between capital and labor, native and foreign born, black and white. Her introduction to social service came at the age of sixteen when she helped to coordinate the relief forces in the great Chicago Fire of 1871. She, along with Upton Sinclair, helped to bring about an investigation of the stockyards by the federal government. She played a major role in securing a Woman's Bureau within the Department of Labor in 1920. During the last decade of her life she concentrated her attention on the betterment of race relations, involving herself in the NAACP and the Chicago Urban League.
- 50 For background on Eugene V. Debs, see Vol. IV, note 3.
- 51 Herbert Hoover (1874-1964), thirty-first president of the U.S. (1929-1933), accumulated a fortune in international mining which enabled him to devote his life to public service. As Secretary of Commerce (1921-1928) he advocated industrial standardization and a planned economic system. In 1928 he was elected President, but had the misfortune to preside over a continuous slide into the Great Depression of the thirties. A number of his anti-depression agencies were incorporated into Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal after Hoover was defeated in the election of 1932.

Frank B. Kellogg (1856-1937) was admitted to the bar in 1877 and became a prominent corporation lawyer in St. Paul, Minnesota. Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1917, he became President Coolidge's ambassador to Great Britain in 1924-1925. From 1925-1929 he served as Secretary of State. For negotiating the Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928) outlawing war, Kellogg was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1929. Later he was appointed to the Court of International Justice.
- 52 For background on James Weldon Johnson, see Vol. V, note 99.

John Fitzpatrick (1871-1946), an emigré to Chicago in 1882, became a journeyman horseshoer and eventually was elected president of the Chicago Federation of Labor (1901). He held that position for more than forty years. He was a vigorous and resourceful trade union leader and a diligent foe of labor racketeering. One of the leaders of the historic 1919 steel strike and a militant unionist, Fitzpatrick opposed Communist efforts to infiltrate the labor movement during the twenties and thirties.

William E. Sweet (1869-1942) graduated from Swarthmore College and became an investment banker in Denver, Colorado. A Democrat, he retired from business in 1921, and received the nomination of his party for governor in 1922. Sweet won the election that year, but failed to be reelected in 1924. In 1926 he lost his bid for election to the U.S. Senate.

Norman Thomas (b. 1884) graduated from Princeton in 1905 and Union Theological Seminary in 1911. He served as pastor of Presbyterian churches in New York until 1918. A pacifist during World War I, he joined the Socialist party and became its leading spokesman after the death of Eugene V. Debs in 1926. From 1928 to 1948 he ran as the Socialist candidate for president. An outspoken critic of the American economic system, he was equally critical of communism and fascism. Among his written works are *Human Exploitation* (1934), and *A Socialist's Faith* (1951).

Jesse Clark (b. 1901) began working for the railroad in 1918. He joined the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen of America in 1919, and served in



various offices until he eventually became president in 1945. While in that position he extended the BRS throughout the U.S. and Canada, and successfully advanced railroad safety.

William Green (1870-1952) served as secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers of America from 1912 to 1924. He succeeded Samuel Gompers as president of the American Federation of Labor, holding that position from 1924 to 1952. During this period the AFL reached its greatest level of membership. After 1935 the Congress of Industrial Organization challenged the conservative unionism of the AFL and Green's arch-opponent was John L. Lewis, head of the CIO and another UMW official.

For background on William Pickens, see Vol. V, note 64.

For background on Morris Hillquit, see Vol. V, note 109.

Joseph Schlossberg (1875-1971) immigrated to the U.S. from Russia in 1888 and began work as a cloakmaker. He led a secessionist movement out of the United Garment Workers of America in 1913 that resulted in the organization of the United Brotherhood of Tailors. He was one of the founders of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in 1914, and edited its weekly paper, *Advance*, for several years. He became increasingly active in Zionist affairs and held offices in many American Jewish organizations. He wrote *The Workers and Their World* (1935).

For the Rand School, see Vol. V, note 136. Algernon Lee was a member of the national committee of the Socialist Party who taught at the Rand School along with his other wide-ranging political activities.

Emanuel Celler (b. 1888) received an A.B. in 1910 and the LL.B. in 1912 from Columbia University, and began the practice of law in New York City. He served as a U.S. Representative from 1922 to 1972, long enough to become ranking majority leader.

Fiorello La Guardia (1882-1947) graduated from New York University in 1910 and began the practice of law. He was elected to Congress in 1917, and again served in that body from 1923 to 1933 as a member of the progressive bloc which, among other measures, passed the Norris-La Guardia Act in 1932. Elected mayor of New York City (1933-1945), he executed a broad array of reforms and was one of the city's most colorful mayors.

Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. (1865-1953) was born in Virginia and between school terms worked in the West Virginia coal mines. Although his family was extremely poor, he managed to attend Virginia Union University and Yale Divinity School. In 1908 he became the pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church, located in New York's Harlem, one of the most renowned Negro congregations in the world. Powell retired from his duties in 1937.

Thomas J. Curtis was a black associate of Frank Crosswaith who assisted the latter with the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers in 1926. He also served as vice-president of the New York State Federation of Labor.

Charles W. Ervin (1865-1953), a Philadelphia native, became a journalist and joined the Socialist Party of America in 1906. In 1917 he became editor-in-chief of the socialist *New York Daily* and *Sunday Call* and retained that post until 1922. He ran unsuccessfully for the Pennsylvania house and the senate, and for governor of New York (1918) on the Socialist ticket. Active in the organization of workers in the needle trades from 1907 until his death, Ervin was public relations adviser to the Amalgamated Workers of America. He was also an active member of the American Newspaper Guild. His autobiography, *Homegrown Liberal*, was published in 1954.

McAllister Coleman (b. 1888) graduated from Columbia University in 1909 and became a reporter for the *New York Sun*. Early in his career he became interested in the labor movement, did publicity work for various trade unions in New York, and in 1921 he went to the coal fields of Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia as a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union and the *New York World*. He was a reporter-columnist for the Federated Press Association and published *Men and Coal* (New York, 1943).

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964), a native of New Hampshire, joined the International Workers of the World in 1906 and participated in numerous strikes, such as the Lawrence, Mass., strike of 1912. She was a founding member of the American Civil Liberties Union (1920), joined the Communist Party in 1937, and became a columnist for the *Daily Worker*. In 1940 she was

expelled from the ACLU for being a Communist, from 1955 to 1957 spent time in prison for advocating the overthrow of the government, and became the first woman to chair the CP's national committee (1961). She died in Moscow. Her autobiography, *I Speak My Piece*, was published in 1955.

- 53 William Gibbs Mc Adoo (1863-1941) was a lawyer practicing in Tennessee before he became a partner in a New York City firm in 1892. He directed two railroad companies, and in 1912 acted as chairman of the Democratic Party campaign. In 1913 he was appointed Secretary of the Treasury. From 1917 to 1919 he served as director-general of the U.S. railroads until the war ended, when he resumed the practice of law in California. He was elected U.S. Senator from that state and served from 1933 until his retirement in 1939.
- 54 Edwin P. Morrow (1877-1935) attended colleges in Tennessee and Kentucky and received his law degree from the University of Cincinnati in 1902. After serving as U.S. District Attorney for Eastern Kentucky, he lost a race for the U.S. Senate in 1913, and two years later for the governorship of Kentucky. He finally succeeded in election to the latter office in 1919 and served until 1923. Morrow served as a member of the U.S. Railroad Labor Board from 1923 to 1926, and as a member of the U.S. Board of Mediation in 1934. He died from a heart attack in 1935.
- 55 For background on the United Hebrew Trades, see Vol. 5, note 106.
- 56 The Emergency Railroad Transportation Act, which took effect in June 1933, was designed to eliminate unnecessary duplication of rail services, and to promote financial reorganization of the carriers. It placed the railroad holding companies under the supervision of the Interstate Commerce Commission.
- 57 Joseph B. Eastman (1882-1944), a graduate of Amherst College (1904), became widely known as an expert transportation administrator. For many years he served as a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission, 1933 to 1936, and as director of the U.S. Office of Defense Transportation from 1941 to 1944.
- 58 For background on Woodrow Wilson, see Vol. V, note 92.  
Robert Todd Lincoln (1843-1926), the only son of Abraham Lincoln to live to maturity, graduated from Harvard University in 1864 and served on General U.S. Grant's staff during the last months of the Civil War. He later practiced law in Chicago, served as Secretary of War under Presidents Garfield and Arthur (1881-1885), and was Harrison's Minister to Great Britain from 1889 to 1893. From 1897 to 1911 he was president of the Pullman Company.
- 59 Robert L. Vann (1879-1940) received a B.A. from Virginia Union University and a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh. In 1910 he began the practice of law, but before long became editor, and then publisher, of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a position he held until his death. He was active in the social and political life of Pittsburgh. For a short time he served as Assistant Attorney General of the U.S. under Franklin Roosevelt.
- 60 Richard B. Moore, a West Indian living in Harlem, was one of the so-called New Negro radicals. A socialist, he wrote for *The Messenger* of A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen until 1921 when he became associated with the Communist Party. He and a small group of black ex-socialists formed the African Blood Brotherhood inspired by an ideology which was partly black nationalist and partly communist. They differed from Randolph in their revolutionary radicalism, and differed from Marcus Garvey's nationalism in their demands for militant self-defense and for a separate black republic in the American South rather than in Africa. Moore also became a leader in the American Negro Labor Congress.

- 61 The "K. of P." is a reference to the Knights of Pythias, a fraternal order which was very popular among blacks.
- 62 For the AFL "outlawing" the color line, see pp. 313-15.
- 63 Roscoe Conkling Simmons, editor, popular orator, was the nephew of Booker T. Washington's third wife. Frank Gillespie and E. A. T. Watkins remain unidentified.
- 64 William N. Doak (1882-1933) of Virginia, joined the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen in 1904. He held various offices in the union and eventually became assistant president of the BRT (1927) and also served as editor of the union's *Railroad Trainmen*. President Hoover appointed Doak Secretary of Labor (1930-1933), a position he used to oppose reforms in the labor movement.
- 65 Martin Sennet Conner (1891-1950) received his B.A. and LL.B. from the University of Mississippi, and another LL.B. from Yale. He practiced law in Mississippi and entered state politics in 1915, becoming Speaker of the House from 1920-1924, and eventually governor from 1932 to 1936. At the expiration of his term, Conner returned to private practice.
- 66 For background on James Duncan, see Vol. IV, note 21.
- 67 For background on Frank Morrison, see Vol. IV, note 33.
- 68 John L. Lewis (1880-1969) was the son of an immigrant coal miner who rose through the union ranks to become president of the United Mine Workers of America. He held that post from 1920 to 1960. As president of the UMWA, the largest union in the nation, he also exerted enormous influence in the American Federation of Labor. Differences over industrial vs. craft unionism led him to break from the AFL and from the Congress of Industrial Organization in 1935. In 1942 he disagreed with CIO president Philip Murray, and led the UMWA back into the AFL. Again differences of opinion resulted in his withdrawal from the AFL in 1947. His willingness to strike against all odds made him synonymous with union militancy.
- 69 The 1924 primary elections in Texas were fought on the Ku Klux Klan issue. The major contest was for the Democratic nomination for governor with the Klan rallying behind Felix Robertson. Miriam Amanda Ferguson, whose initials spelled "Ma," ran against Robertson on an anti-Klan platform. Assisted by her husband James, himself an ex-governor, they denounced the KKK as undemocratic and violent, and soundly defeated Robertson. The fall elections saw Ma Ferguson sweep into office on the anti-Klan surge. Under the withering public and official hostility, the Texas KKK receded as a potent political force in the state. Thus "Ma Ferguson routed the KKK" in Texas.
- 70 For the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers, see pp. 506, 544-46.
- 71 Reinzi B. Lemus was President of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees organized during World War I. He joined Robert Mays in splitting with the Sleeping Car Porters leadership regarding passage of new railroad legislation. The Watson-Parker bill, which was under debate in Congress in 1925-1926, was to change the laws which had governed railroad labor disputes since 1920. Lemus believed that since the federal government would not be empowered to force companies to arbitrate labor disputes, the new bill would not benefit small unions, and would work to the detriment of black workers. His judgment proved correct, resulting in a serious setback for black unions such as the BSCP and the BDCE. Lemus led a chorus of editorial abuse of the BSCP leadership in his *New York Age*.
- 72 Matthew Woll (1880-1956), an emigré to Chicago in 1891, became a photo-engraver and then attended law school. Afterward he became president of the Photo-Engravers Union of North America. In 1919 he assumed a seat on the American Federation of Labor's executive council. He also served as

director of the AFL's legal bureau. He favored the craft organizational concept in the controversy between the AFL and the CIO. One of the most conservative leaders in organized labor, he was a vitriolic anti-communist. Woll also was president of the Union Labor Life Insurance Co. from 1925 to 1955.

- 73 For the Trade Union Education League, see pp. 384, 423-32, and note 102.
- 74 For background on John P. Frey, see Vol. V, note 31.
- 75 For George E. Haynes, see Vol. V, pp. 368-413 *passim*.
- 76 William English Walling was a Southerner, the descendent of a slave-owning family. He traveled extensively and had manifested a deep interest in a variety of social and humanitarian causes before joining the Socialist Party. He joined the party in 1908, immediately associated himself with the left-wing, and became a bitter opponent of white chauvinism within the party. He was an early proponent of a bi-racial organization which would fight for the civil rights of Negroes, and was one of the original founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- 77 The Workers Education Bureau was established in the 1920s by A. J. Muste, supported by the American Federation of Labor, to act as a clearing house for information regarding the growing labor education movement. It lasted only a short time before AFL funds were withdrawn and the Bureau dissolved.
- 78 Henry Ford (1863-1947) worked as a machinist in Detroit before becoming an engineer with the Edison Co. in 1887. He built a gasoline automobile in 1892 and organized the Ford Motor Co. in 1903 which produced the first inexpensive and dependable automobile, launching a new era in American life. He introduced the modern factory assembly line, and inaugurated the \$5 minimum wage for an eight-hour day. Nevertheless he was adamantly opposed to unions.
- 79 J. J. Forrester was grand president of the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks.
- 80 For background on Frank Duffy, see Vol. V, note 32.
- 81 On March 31, 1931, nine Negro boys were indicted at Scottsboro, Alabama, charged with raping two white girls on a freight train bound for Memphis. Eight of them were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. The trials, retrials, and appeals continued for twenty years until eventually all were freed. The International Labor Defense lawyers of the Communist Party who defended the Scottsboro youths turned the case into a cause célèbre for civil rights.
- 82 For background on Angelo Herndon, see pp. 384, 490-503.
- 83 David Sholtz (1891-1953) graduated from Yale in 1914, received the LL.B from Stetson University in 1915, and entered the practice of law in Florida. He entered state politics in 1917, serving in the Florida House of Representatives, as state's attorney, and city judge. A Democrat, Sholtz won the gubernatorial election in 1932 and served four years, but lost a bid for the U.S. Senatorial nomination.

John Randolph (1773-1833) of Roanoke, Virginia, entered the U.S. House of Representatives in 1799. Except for 1814 and 1818, and two years in the Senate (1825-1827), he remained in that body for the next thirty years. Although a capable man, his malicious indiscriminate attacks on friend and foe alike isolated him politically. He consistently opposed all nationalistic measures such as the Bank of the U.S., tariffs, and the Missouri Compromise.
- 84 The "New Negro movement," also known as the Harlem Renaissance, was not so much a social movement as a congealing of "new" racial attitudes and

ideals most dramatically expressed among black intellectuals and artists of the 1920s. What made the New Negro different from the old was his celebration of race consciousness, race pride, and a common sense of purpose. Most New Negroes were "radicals" in that they favored integration over segregation, the status quo.

- 85 Crispus Attucks, "the first to defy, and the first to die," was martyred in the so-called Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770. A forty-seven-year-old seaman, Attucks had been a runaway slave for twenty years when he led a group of hecklers into King Street to harass Captain Preston's company of British troops. Some of the soldiers opened fire on the colonists, killing three and wounding eight, two of whom later died. The significance of Attucks' death lies not in his being "first to die" but in the fact that a runaway slave would be killed making his point about American freedom.

Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the renowned Russian author, exerted an influence upon literature which spread far beyond Russia. He is most famous for *What is Art?* (1898), and *War and Peace* (1865-1872).

Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), Russian novelist, went to work at age eight. Self-educated, he went abroad to collect funds for the revolution which eventually toppled the Czar in 1917. Following a period of exile, he returned to the Soviet Union and in 1934 became president of the Union of Soviet Writers. Among his many books is his autobiographical masterpiece, *Childhood* (1913-1914).

Walt Whitman (1819-1892), the "Good Gray Poet," was born on Long Island, New York, became a printer by trade, and wrote for magazines and newspapers. His book of poems, *Leaves of Grass*, first published in 1855 to little notice, grew with his reputation through twelve editions.

- 86 Gethsemane, an olive grove at the foot of the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, is the traditional site of the betrayal of Jesus.

- 87 President Hoover nominated John J. Parker of North Carolina to the Supreme Court in 1929, but the nomination failed of confirmation because of the support Parker had given as a circuit judge to the principle of the "yellow dog" contract.

Leonidas Dyer (R-Missouri) of St. Louis was one of the few U.S. Congressmen prepared to work with the NAACP to make lynching a federal crime. In April 1918 he introduced an anti-lynching bill in the House of Representatives which became the prototype of subsequent NAACP measures. Essentially, the bill would have protected citizens against lynching where actions of state officials led to the default of the equal protection of the Fourteenth Amendment. The bill provided for heavy fines and imprisonment of state officials who permitted, or failed to prosecute, lynchings. The Dyer bill failed just as those many which followed, and lynching never did become a federal crime. For the definitive study on this topic, see Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).

- 88 "Grandfather clauses" were provisions enacted in several southern states between 1895 and 1910 to disfranchise Negroes despite the Fifteenth Amendment. The clauses restricted voting to those who were lineal descendants of persons who had the right to vote as of January 1, 1867. Negroes could not vote in those states at that time. The U.S. Supreme Court declared the clauses unconstitutional in 1915.

- 89 For the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), see Vol. IV, note 136, and Vol. V, *passim*.

- 90 For background on Booker T. Washington, see Vol. IV, note 8.

- 91 Alfred Baker Lewis (b. 1897) graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1917. He served as New England organizer for the Socialist Party from 1924 to 1940, and with the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, New York City, from 1940 to 1941. Lewis became president of the Mount Vernon Life Insurance Co. (formerly Trade Union Accident and Health Assn.) in 1946. He retired in 1966. A member of the NAACP, he served as national director in 1924, and as treasurer in 1958.

- 92 James Oneal, *The Workers in American History* (New York, 1921) 4th ed. Oneal was the Socialist Party's leading ideologist on the Negro question.
- 93 Father Charles Edward Coughlin (b. 1891) a Roman Catholic priest, gained national attention through his radio broadcasting during the 1930s. Early anti-Wall Street and 'social justice' emphasis, which led to the creation of the Union Party in 1936, gave way to anti-Semitic and pro-Fascist utterances. His magazine *Social Justice*, barred from the mails in 1942 for violating the Espionage Act, expressed the view that: "it is Fascism or Communism. . . . I take the road of Fascism." He was silenced by his superiors.
- 94 The C.I.O. refers to the Committee for Industrial Organization, the precursor to the Congress of Industrial Organization. See pp. 506, 565-79.
- 95 For Ben Fletcher and the IWW, see Vol. V, pp. 532-34, and note 135.
- 96 For background on George C. Hall, see Vol. V, note 76.
- 97 For background on the National Urban League, see Vol. V, note 75.
- 98 For the labor conflict which occurred in Bogalusa, Louisiana, see Vol. V, pp. 483-89.
- 99 The Southern Tenant Farmers Union was founded in 1934, becoming the most notable southern response to the role that Franklin D. Roosevelt's Agricultural Adjustment Administration crop-reduction scheme played in driving the grandchildren of the slaves--along with many whites--off the land. Its bi-racial roots are found in black southern religious protest and white populist rhetoric, but its leaders were socialists. In the STFU's most significant phase, it abandoned all but the trappings of unionism to function primarily as a pressure group. After an unsuccessful alliance with the CIO's agricultural union, it eventually disbanded in 1960. See also, note 142.
- 100 The American Plan was a movement to end the collective bargaining gains won by organized labor during World War I. It was the successor to the Anti-Boycott Association of pre-war years and the League for Industrial Rights founded in 1919. Following Judge Elbert Gary's defeat of the drive to unionize U.S. Steel in 1919, numerous anti-union groups came into existence. They met in a conference of state manufacturers' associations in Chicago in 1921. The name "American Plan" was adopted and over the next few years numerous national unionizing efforts were aborted at least partially because of the organized resistance.
- 101 For background on William D. ("Big Bill") Haywood, see Vol. V, note 127.
- 102 Otto Hall was a black communist who headed the Trade Union Educational League's (TUEL) Negro Department. A veteran of many campaigns, his most dramatic success was organizing the famous Gastonia Strike of 1929 (see note 116).  
The Trade Union Educational League called for an amalgamation of existing craft unions into industrial unions, new industrial unions for the unorganized, independent political action by a party of workers, democratic unionism, a shop-steward system, and a close association with the Soviet Union. To educate white unionists of the self-defeating effect of racism, and to impress upon black workers the necessity of joining with white workers in a common struggle was the primary aim of the TUEL. The TUEL message was disseminated in its official organ, the *Labor Herald*, edited by a white communist, Earl Browder (see note 119). TUEL failed to make much headway among either blacks or whites. The militants underestimated the resistance among white unionists, and failed to appreciate the resistance of black workers to the white unions, instilled by their negative experience with organized labor and deepened by conservative leaders who preached allegiance to the employers. Also, in the textile

and needletrades industries where TUEL conducted its most serious efforts, few blacks were employed.

103 For William Boyce, see note 117.

104 For background on William Z. Foster, see Vol. V, note 114.

105 Joe Hill (Joel Emmanuel Hagglund, 1879-1915) was born in Sweden and emigrated to the U.S. in 1902. After drifting for several years, he joined the Industrial Workers of the World in 1910. An accomplished amateur musician, he became famous for the labor songs he composed. In 1914, while living in Salt Lake City, Utah, he was indicted and convicted for murder on circumstantial evidence. The IWW charged that Hill was framed because he was a radical. Despite mass demonstrations and appeals for leniency, Hill was executed by firing squad on November 19, 1915. He became an instant martyr to the IWW cause.

106 Cyril Briggs, a native of Saint Kitts, edited *The Crusader* and also headed the African Blood Brotherhood, founded in the fall of 1917 as a "revolutionary secret order" by Briggs, Richard B. Moore, Otto Hall, Otto Huiswood, and others. Most of these blacks were West Indians who had been active in the Harlem Section of the Socialist Party but had left the party because they regarded its program in the struggle against colonialism and for Negro liberation as too moderate. The ABB sought "absolute race equality--political, economic, social--and "fellowship within the darker masses and with the class-conscious revolutionary white workers." Its platform called for armed resistance to lynching, unqualified franchise rights for blacks, a struggle for equal rights against all forms of discrimination, the organization of Negroes into established trade unions, self-determination for Negroes in states where they constituted a majority --all as necessary prerequisites for the liberation of Africa from colonial rule and the establishment of a "free Africa." At its peak in 1921, the ABB claimed 2,500 members in fifty-six posts throughout the nation, including areas of strength among the black coal miners in West Virginia. Through *The Crusader*, its monthly organ, the brotherhood mounted campaigns against racial discrimination in unions and urged blacks to organize into separate black unions when they were barred by whites.

107 Robert S. Abbott was editor and publisher of the *Chicago Defender*, the leading Negro weekly in the nation. Abbott started the newspaper in 1910, and quickly revolutionized Negro journalism. The *Defender* repeatedly urged blacks in the South to flee and come North, and these appeals and other features converted the paper into a national weekly for black Americans which, incidentally, turned Abbott into a millionaire. He was bitterly criticized by black militants for his opposition to the Garvey movement, but the *Defender* built its main circulation among the black lower class.

108 William L. Patterson was born in California, lived three years in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and, after his return, served as attorney for the Metal Workers Industrial Union and the National Miners Union. He was attorney in 1932 for several black Army veterans arrested following the expulsion of the Bonus Expeditionary Force from Anacostia Flats. In the fall of that year, Patterson was the Communist party's candidate for mayor of New York City. Patterson was national secretary of the International Labor Defense from 1932 to 1936, years during which he played a leading role in the defense of the Scottsboro youths. Later he became head of the Civil Rights Congress.

Sacco-Vanzetti Case (1920-1927) achieved world-wide attention because it was believed that the defendants had been tried and convicted unfairly. The Italian-born philosophical anarchists were accused of murdering a paymaster and his guard in a Massachusetts shoe factory. Uncertainty about their guilt persisted long after their execution.

109 Sponsored by the Workers (Communist) Party, the American Negro Labor Congress met in October, 1925 with William Z. Foster as the featured speaker. The Congress' purpose was to unionize black workers and to

abolish discrimination against blacks in the American labor movement. It called for the establishment of inter-racial labor committees to plan for the organization of blacks, prevention of discrimination, and pledged to eliminate the employer practice of playing one race against the other in order to undermine labor solidarity. The Congress was hailed in the CP's *Daily Worker*, but denounced by the AFL leadership and the black press.

Black spokesmen had been speculating on the need for a broad coalition of Afro-Americans to exert their collective power since the end of the Booker T. Washington era in 1915. In 1935 Ralph Bunche decided to use the occasion of a conference in Washington, D.C. on the economic status of blacks to institute a movement for a convention of Negro pressure groups to form such an organization. More than 250 prominent blacks signed a call for a National Negro Congress. When it met on February 14, 1936, in Chicago, 817 delegates representing 585 organizations heard A. Philip Randolph launch the new movement. For the first time in Afro-American history a united front of organizations from the entire political spectrum gathered to fight for a common agenda. Foremost on this agenda was the organization of black workers into unions and breaking the color bar in the labor movement. Whatever its strengths and weaknesses, the NNC did give invaluable assistance to the organization of Negro workers into unions.

The NNC was still functioning in 1940, but its effectiveness was greatly curtailed after a split at its convention between Randolph and the Communist Party delegates. Randolph resigned as president charging that NNC was white and Communist dominated. Its last convention was held in October 1946, and the NNC officially dissolved.

- 110 James H. Dillard was closely associated with the Jeanes Fund and the Slater Fund, and was director of the Jeanes Rural School Fund in 1909. President of Tulane University, most of his work with the foundations was toward improving Negro education. He was probably the most influential white philanthropist working in the field of Negro education. Straight University and New Orleans University merged in 1930 and renamed Dillard University in his memory.

For background on Dr. Robert Russa Moton, see Vol. V, note 73.

- 111 Archibald James Carey (1867-1931) attended Atlanta University, the University of Chicago, and graduated from Chicago Theological Seminary. He was ordained into the African Methodist Episcopal ministry in 1891 and served as minister in various churches, especially in Chicago where he made his home. In 1921 he became bishop of Kentucky and Tennessee, holding that position until his death. Bishop Carey was involved in public affairs as well, serving in a variety of secular capacities including delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1920-1922, as trustee of Wilberforce University, and as chancellor of Turner Normal College, Shelbyville, Tennessee.

- 112 The Equal Rights Congress probably refers to one of the meetings held in Washington, D.C., by the National Equal Rights League headed by civil rights militant William Monroe Trotter. Among the issues the League addressed was lynching. It supported the efforts to pass an anti-lynching bill through Congress, and to that end, called several conferences of national civil rights.

- 113 Walter Winchell (1897-1972), American journalist, was a vaudeville performer until he joined the staff of a theater publication in 1922. He began writing for the *New York Evening Graphic* in 1924, and the *Daily Mirror* in 1929. His column became syndicated and enjoyed widespread popularity. In 1932 he began an equally successful career in radio, films, and much later, television.

Walter Lippman (1889-1974) graduated from Harvard University in 1909 and began his career in journalism with the *New Republic*, and subsequently became a prominent writer for the *New York World* and the *New York Herald Tribune*. A social analyst of unusual perception, he authored numerous books, including *The Public Philosophy* (1955), and *The Communist World and Ours* (1959).



- 114 For background on Frederick Douglass, see Vol. I, note 8.
- 115 James W. Ford was born near Birmingham, Alabama, in December, 1893, and forced to work at age fourteen. In 1917, after three years at Fisk University, he entered the Army and was stationed in France during World War I. He entered the trade union movement in Chicago in 1919, and became a leader in the Chicago Federation of Labor. Ford joined the Communist Party in 1926, was active in organizing Negro workers in left-wing unions, became Secretary of the Harlem Section of the Communist Party, and eventually became a member of the Central Committee of the CP.
- Lester B. Granger (b. 1896), public official and scientist, held many positions in the Department of Labor as well as heading the National Conference of Social Work and the Federal Advisory Committee on Employment Security.
- 116 Earl Browder (b. 1891) twice stood as the Communist Party's presidential candidate in 1936 and 1940. During the twenties he edited the *Labor Herald*, official organ of the Trade Union Educational League. His opposition to party policies resulted in his eventual expulsion. His writings include *What Is Communism?* (1936) and *War and Peace With Russia* (1947).
- 117 The Trade Union Unity League first established unions in the coal and textile industries, unions growing out of the old TUEL groups. Each union stated in its constitution that it stood for black and white equality both on and off the job. Also, blacks and whites were organized into the same locals. The TUUL's National Textile Workers' Union, with black communist Otto Hall as chief organizer, was able to maintain unity against the terrorist tactics of the company during the Gastonia, North Carolina, strike of 1929 (see note 119). In the coal industry, TUUL organized the National Miners Union in September 1928 to counter the alleged dictatorial abuses of United Mine Workers President John L. Lewis. The NMU appealed to black miners especially. The official organ of the NMU, *The Coal Digger*, pledged a policy of no racial discrimination. To underscore its sincerity the NMU elected William Boyce, a prominent black miner from Indiana, as national vice president, and he immediately launched a campaign to recruit blacks. In 1930, Isaiah Hawkins, a Negro miner from Frederickstown, Pennsylvania, became full-time head of the NMU's Negro Department. TUUL was about as successful as its predecessor in bringing about any fundamental change in the American labor movement. Although the communists never succeeded in building a revolutionary alliance between white and black labor, they did help to forge a greater willingness among white labor to work with blacks in building an organization. Nevertheless, in 1935 the TUUL dissolved and militants were urged to merge with AFL unions in their respective industries.
- 118 Hugh Frayne (1869-1934) started working in a coal mine at eight years of age. He later became a sheet-metal worker and was a charter member of the Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers International Alliance (1892). Active in the American Federation of Labor, he identified with the more conservative wing of the labor movement and was a close associate of Samuel Gompers. During World War I he served as chairman of the labor division of the War Industries Board and won a Distinguished Service Medal (1923). He wrote pamphlets on trade union subjects.
- 119 The Gastonia Strike of April 1929 at the Loray textile mill in North Carolina grew out of conditions at the mill, but the communist leadership of the National Textile Workers Union soon became the issue. Mob violence occurred and seven communist strikers were convicted of murder; however, they jumped bail and fled to the Soviet Union. Ella May Wiggins, mother of five, whose songs had been a rallying force for the strikers, was shot and killed by vigilantes. No one was convicted of the crime. The national news coverage given the strike revealed many of the problems and working arrangements of a one-industry town.
- 120 For Isaiah Hawkins, see note 117.

- 121 Dennis Lane (1881-1942) started work in the Chicago stockyards, but was blacklisted for representing a group of men with a list of grievances. He then became an organizer for the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen. By 1917 he had become the chief executive officer and dominated that office for the next twenty-five years. He succeeded in organizing the packing house workers during World War I, but lost the plants afterwards. Despite his support for the concept of industrial organizations, he refused to secede with the Congress of Industrial Organizations and kept the Butcher Workmen loyal to the AFL.
- 122 The National Hunger March to Washington during the summer of 1932 refers to the Bonus Expeditionary Force which converged on the nation's capital some twelve to fourteen thousand strong. The unemployed veterans were demonstrating for the immediate payments of their bonuses for wartime service which were due in 1945. For weeks they lived in shanties and tents on the flats of the Anacostia River. They alarmed President Hoover who ordered the Army to disperse them. In the riotous fiasco which resulted no one was killed but there were many injuries. It was later charged that the communists were behind the movement, but that was not the case.
- 123 Benjamin J. Davis, Jr. was born in Dawson, Georgia. He attended public schools in Atlanta, but had to quit because provision for public education for Negroes ended at the sixth grade. He attended Morehouse College (the equivalent of high school), then graduated from Amherst College and Harvard Law School. He joined the International Labor Defense as a lawyer for Angelo Herndon, and the celebrated case of the young Negro victim of Georgia's slave law was the turning point of his life, for he joined the Communist party. Davis went on to join the famous legal and mass defense of the nine Scottsboro boys, to defend the Atlanta Six, who faced a conspiracy charge similar to Herndon's, and to help edit the *Southern Worker*, a Communist Party publication. Later, he came to New York to edit the *Negro Liberator* and joined the editorial board of the *Daily Worker*. In 1943 he was elected as the Communist candidate to the New York City Council and was reelected two years later. One of his achievements while councilman was the fight he led to end Jim Crow in baseball. It was Davis who made possible the official City Hall proclamation of Negro History Week. Indicted under the Smith Act, he was imprisoned for five years for his belief in communism. After his release from prison he returned to work in the Communist Party until his death in 1962.
- 124 James Langston Hughes (1902-1968), often called the Poet Laureate of the Negro people, was born in Joplin, Missouri. Because of the separation of his parents, his childhood was spent in several places. He finished high school in Cleveland when he was fourteen; he had been a member of the staff of the school magazine and an editor of the yearbook. After moving about a great deal, working on freight steamers as doorman and cook, at the same time publishing poems, Hughes completed his formal education at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, graduating in 1929. While at Lincoln he won the Witter Bynner Prize for undergraduate poetry and wrote his novel, *Not Without Laughter* (his alma mater conferred upon him the degree of Litt. D. in 1943). After Lincoln University, Hughes continued to write, publishing poetry, stories, novels, plays, articles and humorous sketches, as well as an autobiography. He won the Harmon Award in 1931 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1934. His books have been translated into many languages. He died in 1968.
- 125 For background on the not always "cordial" race relations along the Galveston docks, see Vol. III, pp. 77-90 and Vol. IV, pp. 62-69.
- 126 John H. Walker (1872-1955) immigrated to Braidwood, Illinois, in 1881. Starting work in the coal mines at age nine, eventually he joined the United Mine Workers and worked as an organizer. He held numerous union offices and served as president of the Illinois State Federation of Labor (1913-1930), but was ousted for his participation in the Reorganized UMW, a group which opposed John L. Lewis's dictatorial style of rule. Walker consistently favored district autonomy which put him at odds with Lewis. Walker unsuccessfully ran for the UMW presidency in 1916 and again in 1918.

- He served as dictrect president from 1905 to 1913 and from 1930 to 1933 when Lewis replaced him.
- 127 For background on Dr. Hubert H. Harrison, see Vol. V, note 101.
- 128 Kelly Miller, "The Negro as a Workingman," 6 (October 1925): 310-13.
- 129 Brookwood Labor College was founded in 1921 with the assistance of Rose Schneiderman (see Vol. V, note 109), who served on its board of policy-makers. The first resident school for workers in the U.S. was coeducational, with a two-year program and three-week summer institutes.
- 130 Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker* (New York, 1931).
- 131 For the black locomotive firemen shot in Mississippi, see pp. 306-10.
- 132 Gorman of the U.T.W. refers to Francis Gorman, vice president of the United Textile Workers.
- 133 Thyra J. Edwards, "Let Us Have More Like Mr. Sopkins," 42 (March 1935): 72, 82.
- 134 Crosswaith's memory apparently failed him in this case. Walt Whitman (see note 85) was known as the "Good Gray Poet," not Edwin Markham (1852-1940). Markham taught school in California and won widespread popularity for his poetry. Much of his work expressed a rhetorical protest against the exploitation of labor. Examples are found in *The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems* (1899), and *Lincoln, and Other Poems* (1901).
- 135 Frank R. Crosswaith (1892-1965) was born in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. After coming to the U.S. and serving in the U.S. Navy, he obtained a scholarship to the Rand School of Social Science, a socialist educational center, where he taught for many years. A superb orator, he was active in the Socialist Party and became known as the "Negro Debs." A firm believer in an integrated labor movement, he organized the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers in 1925, which ten years later was succeeded by the Negro Labor Committee. Crosswaith served as chairman of the Committee for thirty years.
- 136 David Dubinsky (b. 1892) escaped Russian Poland in 1909 after banishment to Siberia for underground labor activism. He came to New York and worked as a cloak cutter and joined the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (1911), eventually becoming president of that union in 1932. He joined John L. Lewis and others to organize the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Under Dubinsky, the ILGWU developed bargaining techniques by which workers cooperated in financing and planning shop operations.
- 137 Anatole France (1844-1924), author, was a French satirist and realist writer. Among his works is *Penguin Island* (1908).
- 138 For background on William Sylvis, see Vol. I, note 63.  
For the National Labor Union, see Vol. II, *passim*.
- 139 For the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor, see Vol. III, *passim*.
- 140 Daniel De Leon (1852-1914) was born in Curacao and took his law degree at Columbia University in 1878. He taught Latin American diplomacy at Columbia from 1883 to 1886. A brilliant if inflexible Marxist, he became a leading ideologist in the Socialist Labor Party and for many years edited the party organs *Weekly People* and the *Daily People*. A controversial figure, he helped found the International Workers of the World in 1905 and wrote extensively on socialism.
- 141 Charles Perry Howard (1879-1938), a native of Illinois, became a printer and joined the International Typographical Union in 1907. After serving the union in several offices, Howard held the position of president from

1926 to 1938. A proponent of industrial unionism, he became secretary of the Congress of Industrial Organization. The ITU never affiliated with the CIO but left the AFL after refusing to pay a special tax to finance the struggle against the rival CIO.

- 142 Howard Kester was born in Martinsville, Virginia, but the family moved to Beckley, W.Va. when he was eleven. He entered Lynchburg College at age 17 and graduated with honors in 1925. In 1927 he entered Princeton Theological Seminary but was not invited to return for a second year for his denunciation of the Seminary for rejecting blacks and opposing organized labor. He then went to Vanderbilt School of Religion. Fired from several jobs for his radicalism, for several years he served as southern secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In 1932 he ran for Congress on the Socialist ticket but lost. A close friend of Norman Thomas (see note 52), for several years Kester was a member of the National Executive Council of the Socialist Party. In addition to investigating lynchings for the NAACP, he worked for the American Civil Liberties Union and later for the Workers Defense League. In 1935 he began his valuable work assisting the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (see note 99) in 1935. He wrote several pamphlets at this time, the best-known being *Revolt Among the Sharecroppers* (New York, 1936).

Harry L. Mitchell (b. 1906), a Tennessee native, was one of the founders of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in 1934. He served as president of the organization from 1944 to 1960. It became the National Agricultural Workers Union (AFL-CIO). Despite the general failure of STFU to win its objectives, Mitchell and others exhibited extraordinary courage in their labors against the planters, and gained much needed publicity for the sharecroppers and tenant farmers of the South. See his autobiographical *Mean Things Happen in This Land: The Life and Times of H. L. Mitchell, Co-Founder of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union* (Montclair, N.J. 1979).

The Workers' Alliance was a militant auxiliary organization of the CIO which united unemployed groups, especially blacks. It fought the use of the unemployed as scabs and provided the CIO with hundreds of volunteer and full-time organizers, blacks among them.

The Highlander Folk School was established in 1932 in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee as an adult education center for the laboring classes of the South. Based on the premise that American society could be made into a truly democratic society only through cooperation instead of competition, the school became the leading training center for southern labor and civil rights leaders. Consistently attacked as subversive, Highlander lost its charter in 1961 under the charge of irregularity in its operation as a non-profit organization. In a few weeks it obtained a new charter, granted to the Highlander Research and Education Center. In 1972 the institution moved to its present location near New Market, Tennessee.

- 143 For the context of the phrase "Magna Carta for black labor," see Vol. II, note 25.



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