

1925

Program

1949

24th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

Train, Chair Car, Coach Porters & Attendants

AN INTERNATIONAL UNION

affiliated with the

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

Under the Auspices of

CHICAGO DIVISION

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

August 22nd - 25th, Inclusive

Chicago, Illinois

PUBLIC LABOR - EDUCATION MEETING

Opening 24th Anniversary Celebration

of the

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

August 22, 1949, 8:00 p.m., Daylight Saving Time

at

CHICAGO DIVISION HEADQUARTERS

3456 South State Street, 5th Floor

Speakers

HONORABLE CHARLES J. JENKINS...*Member of Illinois Legislature*

HALENA WILSON.....*Int. President, Ladies' Auxiliary*

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH.....*International President*

M. P. WEBSTER.....*President, Chicago Division, Chairman*

The Musical Program will be under the direction of Brother Foster Mitchell, Chorister of the Chicago Division, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

The Officers and members of the Chicago Division of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters invite the friends of organized labor particularly, and the Chicago public generally, to attend this meeting to review with them the developments of this Organization, which has been highly successful in advancing the economic interest of the railroad workers particularly, and of Negro workers generally. With the labor market tightening up and unemployment rolls increasing, workers generally and Negro workers particularly face many complex problems in the future.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has been in the forefront of the fight for economic justice for Negro workers, and it feels an obligation to review its experiences to the end that the benefits that might be gained through organized efforts will be available for other workers. **The public is invited to the extent of the facilities of the hall.**

ADMISSION FREE

NO COLLECTION

Issued at

CHICAGO DIVISION - BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

3456 South State Street, 5th Floor

Victory 2-7124

BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

An International Union

Affiliated with the

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

History

The Pullman porters were the pioneers in the organization of trade unions among Negro workers on the railroads. Several years prior to World War I, the moving spirits in the International Railroad Men's Benevolent Industrial Association (the first nationwide effort to organize Negro railroad workers) were the Pullman porters. The present First International Vice President of the Brotherhood was an officer of that Organization.

However, during World War I under Government control of railroads, unfortunately there developed a diversity of organizations, all working against each other, which resulted in much chaos and confusion to the general detriment of the Pullman porters particularly and railroad workers generally. When the roads were turned back to private ownership, Congress passed the Transportation Act of 1920 for the purpose of facilitating the return of the railroad carriers to their former owners. In this law was Title 3 which provided for the organization and collective bargaining of railroad employes. Most of the unorganized railroad employes availed themselves of the opportunity and began to organize under Title 3 of the Transportation Act of 1920.

However, at that time, The Pullman Company offered its porters a Plan of Employee Representation, generally referred to as the Company Union. It was accepted by many porters because it didn't cost anything, the Company paying all of the expenses and that of those who participated in it. Its operation for several years, culminating in the "famous" 1924 Conference held in Chicago, proved beyond a doubt that it was an useless institution in the porters' interest.

In 1925 efforts were made to develop a bona fide trade union among the Pullman porters. Six Pullman porters, among whom was Ashley L. Totten, our present International Secretary-Treasurer, held a meeting in New York City on the 25th day of August, 1925, in which the program, which ultimately resulted in the organization of this great institution, was launched. Threats were made to the participants in this meeting which prompted them to look outside the Pullman service for help in the organization of this group. It was then that they found our present International President A. Philip Randolph. From this humble beginning, it has developed over a period of years to the present Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Train, Chair Car, Coach Porters and Attendants, an International Organization affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, with some 18,000 members in 117 cities in the United States and Canada.

During the early struggles of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, there were no National Labor Relations Boards, no National Mediation Boards, and there was not even a Railway Labor Act when the Brotherhood started. The Company at that time was very hostile to the efforts to organize this group, and for many years it was aided by some of the largest Negro newspapers in this country and some of the most top flight colored leaders. But despite the tremendous opposition, the Pullman porters pushed their way to the front and built a successful organization.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is not here because of the love anybody had for it, but it is here because it pushed everybody else out of its way. Many men sacrificed their economic lives for the principle of trade union organization among Pullman porters. Some 500 men were discharged during the struggle. It is to those men, whose aggressiveness, stability, stalwartness, and loyalty to the cause brought this organization into being, that this 24th Anniversary is dedicated.

Structure

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is basically and fundamentally a trade union. It is a trade union dedicated to the proposition of developing and advancing the economic status of its membership. Its program is based upon a pure trade union philosophy of developing a strong organization to protect the workers' interests on the job.

The basis of the Organization is the Local membership composed of some 18,000 people in 117 Local Divisions. Local officers and delegates to the International Convention are elected by the paid-up members of the Local Division. Local officers and delegates to the International Convention are elected biennially, and the officers serve for the term of two years. Delegates elected to the International Convention come from the various Locals of the country and meet in the designated places. When organized in Convention, they are the supreme power of the Organization. Ninety-nine per cent of the delegates to the International Convention are lay members—Pullman porters, train porters, chair car porters and attendants. They are in supreme authority, and during the deliberations of the Convention, they promulgate the policy of the Organization and elect the International Officers, who serve for the ensuing term of two years.

In the interim of the Convention, the International Executive Board, composed of 13 members, the majority of whom are lay members, is the supreme authority of the Organization. The International Executive Board meets twice per year and is empowered to meet on its own motion any time between Conventions when the occasion necessitates it. Nominations of all International Officers are made from the floor of the Convention, and the International Officers are elected by a majority vote of the Convention. The International Officers and the International Executive Board make reports to the International Convention delegates of their stewardship of the Organization's program of the period between International Conventions.

The Organization is financed solely from the dues and taxes collected from the members of the Organization, according to the regulations and provisions of the Brotherhood's Constitution. It does not engage in any extra-curricular activities to raise its funds.

Program

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters follows a strictly trade union program. It bargains for wages and working conditions. It handles the grievances and claims of its members with the various carriers of the nation. It makes available to its membership all the rights and privileges that they enjoy under the Railway Labor Act, the Railroad Retirement Act, the various Workmen's Compensation Acts, and all the Laws that offer any means of protection to railroad men. It maintains an efficient staff for handling grievances, and a legal staff to handle any legal questions involving the members of this Organization.

This Organization functions through its Local Divisions. For administrative purposes, the Organization is divided into five Zones where Zone Officers maintain a staff of competent workers to supervise the officers of the Local Divisions to carry out the functions of a trade union. In each Division there are a series of committees, the most important of which is the Committee on Organization and Education.

Members of the Committees on Organization and Education run in numbers of 5 or 6 in small districts to 200 and 250 in large Districts such as New York and Chicago. These Committees are composed of lay members, the porters, attendants, and bus boys. They meet from time to time to carry on the organization and education functions of the Organization. They are continually keeping before the membership their responsibility to the Organization in attending meetings and paying their dues. The most important part of the function of these Committees is its program to develop the highest type of efficiency on the job, and incidentally the highest type of organization to protect the job.

The committees who handle the grievances and claims in the various Divisions are selected from the lay membership of the Organization. This machinery is developed to the highest point of efficiency on a Local, Zone, and National scale. When members of the Organization are called in on complaints, the members of the Grievance Committee assist the members in preparing their statements on the complaint. If the complaint reaches the point where the employe is given a hearing under the rules of the contract, the Committee represents him in the hearing.

Claims for short payment or for violation of the contract are also handled by these Grievance Committees under the direction of the International Officer in charge of the Zone. The handling of grievances and claims is strictly supervised by the International Organization. As a result of the efficient handling of these matters by this Organization, the attitude of many carriers and The Pullman Company in disciplining this class of men has been revolutionized. Some carriers only had one penalty exacted of porters, and that was discharge. The efficiency of the Brotherhood's machinery has made discharge quite expensive to the carrier when it is not based on sound reasons, and many cases are settled without going beyond the Company.

The Brotherhood progresses cases which are not settled with the Management to the Third and Fourth Divisions of the National Railroad Adjustment Board. A special officer and staff are provided for that purpose in the Chicago Division Headquarters. Thousands of dollars have been collected on many claims for members of this Organization. Many men have been returned to their jobs after having been unjustly discharged, and back pay for being wrongfully discharged has been collected up to \$7,000.00 for one individual member. The aggressiveness with which this Organization pursues this matter commands the respect of railroad carriers of the nation, and its members definitely have good job security.

During the off Convention year, a Grievance and Claims Clinic is held in the various strategic points of the nation where the Local Officers and Grievance men attend and review and discuss the best methods of handling grievances.

The Ladies Auxiliary

An integral and effective part of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is its Ladies Auxiliary, an organization composed of the wives, daughters, and other women relatives of members of the Brotherhood. It is organized on an international basis the same as the Brotherhood, with Local Divisions of the Ladies Auxiliary in the various cities of the nation.

Its work is largely educational, bringing to the women relatives of our members the fundamental principle of trade unionism, and actively participating in such programs as workers' education, consumers' cooperatives, the bringing about of women's 8 hour day, child labor laws, workmen's compensation acts, legislation on slum clearance and housing, and kindred subjects. It has its own treasury, and carries on an effective program in the general interest of the members of this Organization.

Storeroom Non-clerical Employes

Several years ago in a Mediation Board election, the storeroom non-clerical employes who work for The Pullman Company voted for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to represent them. Since that time, the Brotherhood has set up Local Divisions in the Districts where there is a sufficient number of storeroom non-clerical employes, and the Organization is functioning in their behalf. Negotiations for pay increases and reduction of hours to 40 hours per week have been carried out, and these men will get the best trade union services.

However, very recently, the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks has attempted to take these employes away from us under its jurisdiction. The case is now before the National Mediation Board, and we are expecting a decision on the matter in the near future.

Train Porters and Chair Car Attendants

After the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters had been successful in writing a good contract for the Pullman porters, its jurisdiction was extended to train porters and chair car attendants on various railroads of the country, who were sadly in need of organization. When the Brotherhood came into this field, there were no standards and no system. Some of these men were way behind the parade in the pay increases granted to other railroad employes.

There are now organized under the Brotherhood's banner, with good sound contracts that can be enforced, 42 groups of train porters and chair car attendants, employed by as many railroad carriers. Because of their organization into the Brotherhood, they are keeping pace with other railroad workers of the nation in developing higher standards. The pay of some of these groups when the Brotherhood took them over some 8 or 10

years ago was as low as \$75.00 per month for 240 hours. Effective as of September 1, 1949, the lowest paid group of train porters or chair car attendants of the nation will be approximately \$230.00 per month for 205 hours. Because of the protection this Organization provides, these men now can feel more free in working on their jobs.

The train porters of the nation have serious problems. The powerful Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen with its large treasury has been fighting the head end train porters for many years. They have obtained Awards from the First Division of the National Railroad Adjustment Board, which if allowed to be carried out to their conclusions, would have deprived many train porters of the right to work on the head end of trains. Because of the moral and financial strength of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the interests of these men have been amply protected. Relief has been obtained from the Courts preventing the elimination of these men from their jobs.

Two outstanding cases are those involving the Missouri-Kansas-Texas train porters, whose case is now pending in the United States Courts, and the case of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe train porters, who were the subject of an adverse decision rendered by the National Railroad Adjustment Board, First Division, which action was enjoined by the Courts at the instance of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and was progressed by the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen to the United States Supreme Court, which Court recently upheld the Brotherhood in its contentions against these Awards, which would have deprived these train porters of their jobs.

The question of fighting for these train porters is not only a question of the train porters as such, but since the train porters are being driven off the jobs after they get good, it is only a natural sequence that other Negro railroad workers will be driven off their jobs by powerful organizations when their jobs get to the point where they are attractive enough to lure white men. The organizations of the so-called Four Big Brotherhoods on the railroads have color clauses in their constitutions, and unless the pattern of taking jobs away from Negroes is stopped, no Negro railroad worker will be safe.

Negro Locomotive Firemen

Some 8 years ago, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organized the Negro Locomotive Firemen on the railroads of the south through the Provisional Committee of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to organize Negro Locomotive Firemen. The same character of fight that has been carried on by the Brotherhood to prevent train porters from being driven from the head end of trains is now being carried on in the interest of Negro Locomotive Firemen.

Canadian Railroad Workers

Several years ago, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters went into the field of organizing the Canadian Pacific porters, the bulk of whom are Negroes. It has been highly successful in organizing this group of men. Through its contract, the Brotherhood has revolutionized the relationship between the Canadian railroad carriers and its Negro workers. The Brotherhood now has 90% of the porters on the Canadian Pacific, and is now, through its organization and education program, extending its activities to the Canadian National Railroads.

Fair Employment Practice

The term Fair Employment Practice, now a matter of common parlance among Negroes of the nation, was originated by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters at the beginning of World War II. It is one of the few extra-curricular activities in which the Organization has participated morally and financially. It was brought into being by the March on Washington Movement set up by International President Randolph, which brought sufficient pressure on the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration to bring about the issuance of Executive Order 8802, which set up a National Committee on Fair Employment Practice for the purpose of eliminating discrimination against workers in Government and war industries on account of race, creed, color, or national origin. International Vice President Milton P. Webster was a member of that Committee from its inception until it passed out of existence as a result of the ending of the war.

The fight for a national law for a Fair Employment Practice Commission has been spearheaded by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. It set up the National Council for Fair Employment Practice and raised the bulk of the finances to carry it on. It is still carrying on the fight for a national law for Fair Employment Practice.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the A. F. of L.

In 1930 the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters became affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. This affiliation brought down an avalanche of condemnation on the leaders of the Brotherhood from their opponents on the grounds that the American Federation of Labor discriminates against Negroes, and we could not expect to make any headway in that kind of an institution. The experience of the Brotherhood in the American Federation of Labor over a period of years has vindicated the wisdom of its leaders in affiliating with this Organization.

The American Federation of Labor has wielded and does wield a vast influence on the labor front of the nation. Its influence in the Legislative field is far outstanding. The program that it promulgates affects all workers, organized and unorganized, black and white. Through its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor, the Brotherhood participates in the inner councils of the American Federation of Labor, and for the last twenty years its voice has been heard in the Conventions of the Federation in no uncertain terms in an effort to break down the discriminatory practices within that group.

As a result of this activity, the American Federation of Labor is definitely committed to the program of the equality of our workers in the economic field. Its sponsorship of the Fair Employment Practice Legislation, the Anti-Poll Tax Bill, the Anti-Lynching Bill, and all of the Civil Rights Program is evidence of the progress made in that respect. Some of the unions which had color clauses in their constitutions when the Brotherhood first became affiliated with the American Federation of Labor have since that time eliminated these color clauses from their constitutions and are integrating Negroes into their local unions on the basis of workers.

There are approximately a million Negro members in the American Federation of Labor Union. The race

issue was rarely discussed at any time in the various conventions until the Brotherhood's delegates started its campaign against discrimination within the Federation. While all of the discrimination in the American Federation of Labor Unions has not been eliminated, rapid strides have been made, and the power and the influence of the Federation have been used and are being used on many fronts to break down racial barriers in the economic fields.

President William Green has spoken at a number of International Conventions of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and he has pulled no punches in his denunciation of racial discriminatory practices within the labor movement.

Full Crew Bills

In recent months a new opposition to Negro railroad workers, particularly train porters, has developed in the form of bills being introduced in the various legislatures of the states known as the Full Crew Bills. Among other provisions, these bills as a rule state the following:

"Section 1. (i) 'Brakeman' means a person whose duties are to assist the conductor in the operation and protection of the train and to perform related work.

Section 7. All other trains not specifically referred to herein before shall be manned by a crew of competent employes which shall include one conductor, one flagman and one brakeman."

If such bills were passed, the practical application of the law would eliminate hundreds of Negro workers off the head end of trains. These bills have been aggressively opposed by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and they were defeated through its efforts in the States of New Mexico, Colorado, Missouri, and Illinois in the year of 1949.

Opposition to the Brotherhood

During the first ten years of its existence, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters met drastic opposition, which it believes was financed by the powerful corporation which was opposed to the organization of Pullman porters. Most of this opposition unfortunately, manifested itself through individual Negroes or Negro agencies. But, after the Brotherhood won the Mediation Board election in 1935 and was certified by that Board to represent the Pullman porters of the nation, all organized opposition vanished. But in recent years, opposition of a pure nuisance value is being continually met and overcome.

Two C.I.O. groups, namely, the Red Caps Union and another organization which styles itself as the Transport Workers Union, C.I.O., have attempted to muscle in on the Brotherhood's membership. The Red Caps Union attempted to take the Milwaukee Road porters and the Baltimore and Ohio porters away from the Brotherhood, but it was defeated in the elections. The inconsistency and irresponsibility of these C.I.O. groups is evidenced by the fact that the Red Caps Union, C.I.O., has tried to take the Atlantic Coast Line train porters away from us, and this Transport Workers Union, C.I.O., is spreading literature among the Pullman porters in Chicago. Apparently they haven't agreed among themselves in what fields they should work.

Another organization known as the International or the Lewis Organization attempted to create confusion among the Illinois Central train porters several months ago, but were thoroughly defeated by these men. The tactics of these groups are definitely destructive because they have nothing to offer in their campaign but unjust and unreliable criticism. But, since the Brotherhood has been successful in developing its large Organization against the opposition of a powerful agency like The Pullman Company, it feels that it can assure its membership that it has nothing to worry about from the feeble back stabs that are made by these irresponsible groups.

Another form of opposition manifested itself a couple of years ago in the form of newspaper stories that spontaneously appeared in a large number of Negro papers of the nation. These stories attempted to create the impression that Pullman porters were leaving the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in large numbers and were going into the C.I.O. because the Brotherhood officials refused to make financial reports. The source of these stories was traced to an irresponsible news agency, which for some reason that we haven't been able to find out as yet, was interested in spreading these false stories.

However, libel suits were instituted against several Negro newspapers, but rather than to stand trial on the libel suits, three of the newspapers, the Pittsburgh Courier, the St. Louis Argus, and the New York Amsterdam News, made public retractions of the stories and settled the law suits for a nominal sum of money. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was not interested in obtaining any financial gain from this situation. It pressed these suits for the sole purpose of trying to impress upon some of these papers, which have assumed leadership in the field of Negro journalism, that they have a responsibility to the people who make their existence possible, of which the members of this Organization are a part, and that they should not print these irresponsible and false stories without first making some investigation as to what the facts are. This Organization is responsible for the security, welfare and happiness of some fifty thousand (50,000) people, the bulk of whom are Negroes. It could not sit idly by and allow these false stories to remain unchallenged.

The Chicago Division, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

The Chicago Division, under whose auspices these activities are being held, is the largest Local Division of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Much of the history and many of the sacrifices were made by the members of the Chicago Division. The founder of the Chicago Division is John C. Mills, present member of the International Executive Board, who was discharged during the thickest part of the fight of unionism, after having spent twenty-seven (27) years on the job.

On the accompanying pages are pictures of officers, committee members and others whose activities are highly influential in making the Chicago Division as successful as it has been over a period of twenty-four (24) years.

The officers of the Chicago Division are: Milton P. Webster, President L. O. Manson, First Vice President; Claud E. Grooms, Second Vice President; and Ernest Smith, Secretary-Treasurer. The members of the Executive Board are: John C. Mills, Benjamin F. Wilson, C. E. Samonte, J. A. Martin, William F. Martin, William Northrip, Ernest Smith and Manuel Kyle.



Part of Committee on Education and Organization, Chicago Division.



Group of members of the Ladies' Auxiliary. (Right to Left) : Halena Wilson, President and Olga Roberts, Secretary-Treasurer.



Clerical and secretarial staff, Chicago Division.



Group of Chicago Commissary Attendants.



SAMUEL JEFFERSON
Chicago Western District
Member of Grievance Committee



BENJAMIN F. WILSON
Chicago Western District
Member of Executive Board



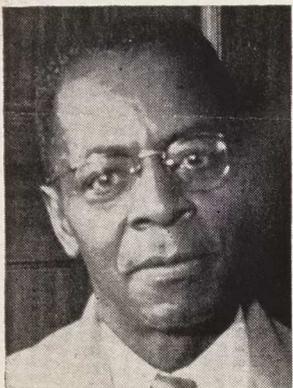
W. C. BLACKWELL
Chicago Northern District
Member of Grievance Committee



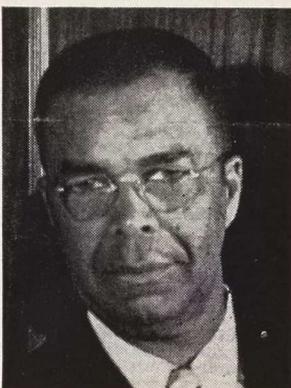
S. BROIDA
Chairman
Storeroom Non-clerical Employees



WILLIAM F. MARTIN
Chicago Eastern District
Member of Executive Board



E. C. GARRISON
Chicago Eastern District
Member of Grievance Committee



L. O. MANSON
Chicago Central District
First Vice President



J. A. MARTIN
Chicago Central District
Member of Executive Board



C. E. SAMONTE
Chicago Commissary
Member of Executive Board



PORTWOOD JOHNSON
Chicago Commissary
Member of Grievance Committee



ROBERT HILL
Chicago Southern District
Member of Grievance Committee



W. L. HICKEY
Chicago Southern District
Member of Grievance Committee



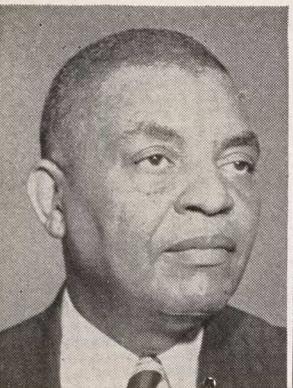
MARSHALL HARRIS
Chicago & Alton
Parlor Car Porters



AUGUSTUS CHAPPELL
Chicago & Alton
Train Porters



ROSCOE PERRY
Chicago, Burlington & Quincy
Coach Porters



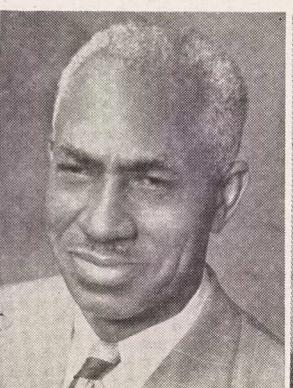
A. G. BAILEY
Illinois Central
Train Porters



OLIVER CRUTCHFIELD
Chicago & Eastern Illinois
Train Porters



WILLIAM NORTHRIP
Chgo., Milw. St. P. & P. R.R.
Member of Executive Board



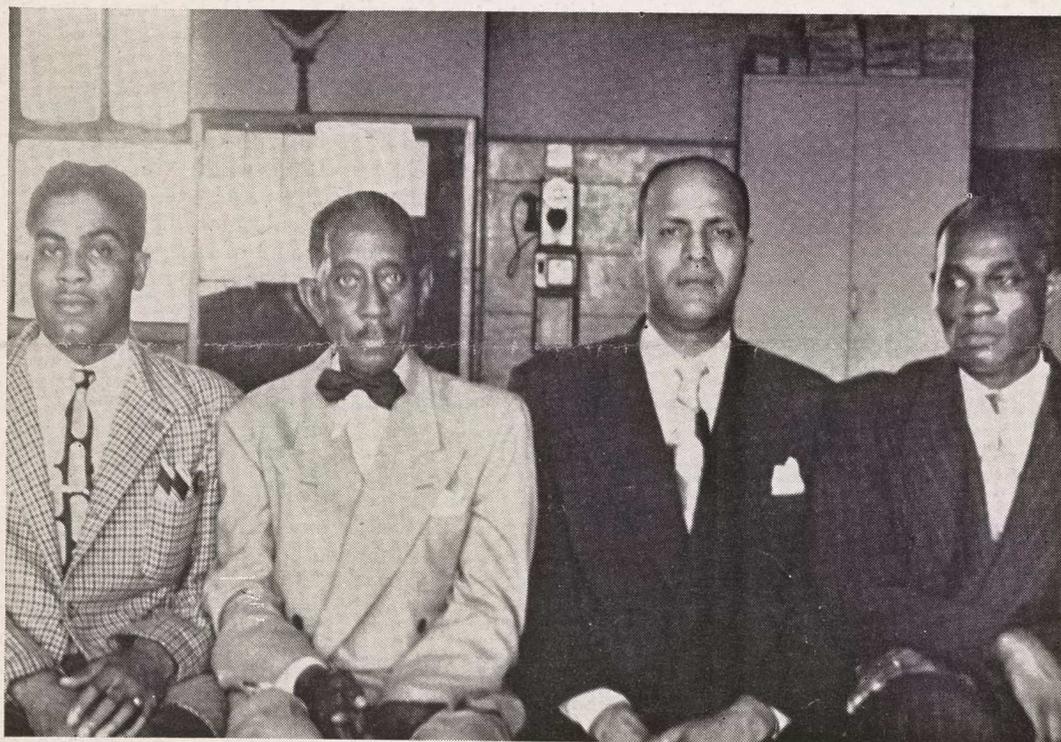
S. HAIRSTON
Chicago Northern District
Chaplain



THEODORE BROWN
Chgo. & N. W. Parlor Car Porter
Res. Dir. & Ed. of "Black Worker"



Picture of regular meeting of Chicago Division. Meetings of Chicago Division are staggered over several days in order to give every members an opportunity to attend.



Full-time officials of the Chicago Division. (Left to Right): L. L. McDonald, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer on leave from the Chicago Central District; Ernest Smith, Secretary-Treasurer, formerly of the Chicago Western District; Claud E. Grooms, Second Vice President on leave from the Chicago Western District; and Manuel Kyle, Field Agent, Member of Executive Board on leave from the Chicago Northern District.

This space was reserved for the picture of JOHN C. MILLS. John C. Mills along with Ashley L. Totten was one of the founders of this Organization and was one of the stalwart pioneers who was "shot down" during the days of the drastic opposition after having spent twenty-seven years working on a Pullman car. Much of the success in organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, generally, and the Chicago Division, particularly, was due to the efforts of Brother John C. Mills and his co-workers. To him and others in his class, ~~is this 24th Anniversary Celebration dedicated.~~

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AMERICAN
HISTORY
AND LIFE

ARCHIVES
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