

# The Black Worker

Official Organ of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

"Ye Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make You Free"

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## SOME PULLMAN PORTERS' GRIEVANCES

**WAGE CUT** Porters everywhere are in revolt against the recent wage cut of \$5.00. They are not only grumbling about the money taken from them but they are peeved and annoyed over the secret manner in which it was done. It is a matter of common knowledge that the porter-officials of the Employee Plan or Company Union refused to make any statements at all about the wage cut before it was effected. Brotherhood officials, of course, knew of the two secret conferences held by the Company with its hand-picked company union representatives to slash porters' wages. Were it not for the letter sent out by the Congregational Ministers' Union, at the request of Brothers Randolph and Webster, who told the story of Pullman oppression of porters to this body on the day the wage cut was being made, the letter that condemned said reduction in wages, the porters would not have known that their pay was being diminished until they received their next check.

The Company attempted to defend the pay cut of the porters on the grounds that Pullman Officials had sustained a cut of more than 10 per cent, as though porters' wages could be compared with officials' salaries. Those officials receiving over 10 per cent cut, it is interesting to note, received a salary of \$400.00 a month. There is much justification for the porters widespread condemnation of their wage reduction, for as a result of the industrial depression which has lessened the travel, they have in consequence of the virtual vanishing of tips, received a reduction in income of some 33 per cent. The Company is perfectly unconcerned about the dropping in tips to almost the zero point. It readily takes advantage of its power to slash porters' wages, knowing fully that it is reducing the porter to a starvation level. From the very beginning of Pullman to the present time tips have been recognized as constituting practically one-half of the income of porters. Pullman officials, including former president Robert Todd Lincoln, have testified before industrial commissions that they did not consider that it would be hardly possible for a porter to work for the wages he received alone. They also contended that a good porter always made good tips. But what can they say now? What will they say? There are practically no tips at all. Porters make trip after trip in different parts of the country and return to their home districts in debt. Men are compelled to borrow money, while enroute, to buy food. Not only are porters suffering from this 33 per cent reduction in income, but they are not even certain of getting any income at all.

**FURLOUGHING** From the beginning of the industrial depression in 1929, the Company has inaugurated a ruthless and unfair system of furloughing porters. Probably more than 3,000 have been laid off during this time. No attempt has been made by the Company to provide work for these men. While other corporations, with more industrial enlightenment, have attempted to reduce the hours of work as a means of providing employment to their regular force, at least part time, Pullman simply lays men off right and left without rhyme or reason. Of course it claims that bad business is the cause, but upon reading fiscal reports setting forth the financial condition of the Company, one notes the amazing, startling and unusual fact, that it has not passed paying a dividend. **The fact is Pullman Cut Porters' Wages to Pay Dole in Dividends to Stockholders.**

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## PREACHERS ENDORSE BROTHERHOOD

Following the endorsement of the Sleeping Car Porters' Union, by the Congregational Ministers' Union (white) February 8th, in Chicago, Dr. Charles Wesley Burton, Chairman of the Citizens Committee of the Chicago Division to aid the Brotherhood, and A. Philip Randolph, National President, appeared before The Baptist Ministers' Conference of Chicago, the A. M. E. Ministers' Association, the C. M. E. Ministers' Alliance, the A. M. E. Zion Ministers' Conference, and presented the case of the porters and Negro labor, requesting the endorsement of these bodies of clergymen. In every instance endorsement was given and cooperation promised. This is the first time that the porters' union has been able to enlist the unified backing of the colored ministers of Chicago.

## NEGRO WOMEN TURN ATTENTION TO PROBLEMS OF LABOR

One of the most effective agencies in the life of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has been and is the Colored Women's Economic Council, or auxiliary to the union. This movement was started soon after the Brotherhood was formed in order that the porters' household may become labor-minded and the women relatives fully realize the high purpose and meaning of the struggle. Officials of the Brotherhood saw the necessity of enlisting the moral and spiritual support of the women. This is probably the only group of colored women in America who are committed to a basic and constructive, as well as aggressive economic program.

On the 28th of February, in the Brotherhood Headquarters, the Council, under the direction of Mrs. Ruth Moore-Smith, held an Inspirational Meeting with a picturesque Candle-Lighting Demonstration. Not only did the Brotherhood receive financial

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### SOME PULLMAN PORTERS' GRIEVANCES

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The chief cause for furloughing porters is not so much poor business conditions as it is long hours of work they are subjected to. If porters enjoyed the 8-hour day, or 240-hour work month, instead of 3,000 being laid off, a thousand or more would have been taken on. The work month of nearly 400 hours is not only unjust, unfair, and unreasonable but inhumane and harks back to the cruel system of slavery. Other railway employees, including Pullman conductors, operate on a 240-hour work month basis or nearly one-half the time of porters. Now the Big Four Brotherhoods are fighting for the 6-hour day, and will get it. If the Pullman Company was the friend it pretends to be to the porters, it would grant them the 8-hour day which the Adamson 8-hour Law enacted by Congress during the World War provides. Of course, Pullman is not going to give the porters anything it is not forced to give them, and it can only be forced to grant the porters industrial justice by the organized might of the porters themselves, symbolized in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**CHAIN-GANGING RUNS** Probably the most flagrant indication of the Pullman Company's bad faith with the porters and the public is its present policy of pooling runs, thereby adding even more hours of work to the porters who have not been furloughed. For instance, there are porters operating between New York and Springfield, Mass., who are on the road six nights a week, having only one night to sleep in a bed at home. Despite this grueling and exhaustive tax upon the nerve and physical energies of the porters, Pullman spotters and inspectors are ever snooping around the cars trying to find a porter nodding in order to write him up and give him ten or fifteen days in the streets or book suspension. What porter, pray tell us, can avoid dropping to sleep now and then, who spends six nights of the week on the road, and be it known, he is not allowed to sleep during these nights at work. On the runs from New York to Montreal, Canada, and up state New York, porters who formerly made one round

trip and received a layover at home, under this vicious chain-ganging of runs, by Pullman efficiency experts, must make two round-trips, or remain four nights on the road before receiving only one night at home. The public will, doubtless, be interested in knowing that porters have very little time to sleep during the day as a result of this pooling of runs. For example, the porter operating from N. Y. to Montreal, leaves New York six o'clock in the evening and arrives in Montreal the next morning about eight o'clock and leaves Montreal that same day at six o'clock in the evening. He arrives in New York about eight o'clock the next day, and leaves for Montreal again that same day in the evening at six o'clock. Because of the fact the porter doubles out of the districts, he actually gets no more than about three hours of sleep during the day. Therefore, this pooling of runs policy is striking at the health and life of the thousands of porters in the Pullman service. The Company is doing probably more than any other industrial corporation to make unemployment conditions worse. There is no remedy for this situation, except bona fide collective action of the porters through an organization which they control. It is a notorious fact that the Pullman Employee Representation Plan, or company union, has conspired and cooperated supinely and slavishly with the company in imposing upon the porter the most reprehensible and indefensible conditions of work imaginable.

### CONGRESS PASSES ANTI-YELLOW DOG CONTRACT BILL

By a vote in the Senate of 75-5 and in the House of Representatives of 363-13, Congress registered its definite and unequivocal opposition to injunctions employed by corporations to restrict strikers and yellow dog contracts that bind workers not to join bona fide trade unions while in the employ of corporations who have in force the said yellow dog contracts. This is a signal victory for organized labor and a fine tribute to the militant liberalism of Senator George W. Norris and Congressman Fiorello H. LaGuardia. Of course, this legislation does not al-

ter the status of the Brotherhood's injunction case but it unquestionably gives it splendid moral support. The Brotherhood's injunction program will proceed on as it has been mapped out. Trial of the case will come in due time. Because of the precedent established in the case of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks against the Texas and New Orleans Railroad, which resulted in the significant and far-reaching decision of the U. S. Supreme Court, outlawing the Company Union on railroads, the outlook for victory in the Brotherhood's legal encounter is most reassuring and favorable. The action of Congress against the Yellow Dog Contract indicates the trend of public sentiment in favor of labor receiving its untrammelled right of self-organization. Of course, all workers will be required to organize into trade and industrial unions before they can take advantage of this law, the Railway Labor Act, or the Supreme Court decision, against company unions. Workers' unions must initiate action in equity courts in order to break down company unions and abolish yellow dog contracts. Legislation and court decisions do not execute themselves in the interest of workers or anybody else. The workers must see to it that said legislation and court decisions are obeyed by big business. The fact that this anti-injunction, anti-yellow dog contract bill has been passed by Congress, does not mean that the employers which seek to enslave workers through the aforementioned devices will immediately abolish yellow dog contracts, company unions and their various methods of curtailing the self-expression of the workers. Yellow dog contracts and company unions will continue to plague the workers so long as the workers permit employers to maintain them. The recent law and the Supreme Court decision against company unions, yellow dog contracts and injunctions must be enforced and they will not be enforced except through the militant, organized struggle of the workers. It is therefore important for the porters to realize, that their task is to continue to build up the Brotherhood so that it will possess the economic power to bring the Pullman Company to book before the court through our injunction procedure.



## NEGRO WOMEN TURN ATTENTION TO PROBLEMS OF LABOR

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assistance from this entertaining and ennobling effort, but it was also greatly enriched by the fine spiritual aspect which stressed the need of sacrifice on the part of the men for the attainment of industrial justice. The Chicago Council is being carried forward under the leadership of Mrs. Helena Wilson. The Inspirational Service was marked by the delightful singing of Mrs. Bessie Dixon and the recitational work of some of the members.

Other women giving cooperation to the Brotherhood are those included in the Federated Clubs of Chicago. In the Poro Dining Room March 8th, a group of women assembled and listened to the presentation of the case of the Brotherhood by M. P. Webster, President Chicago Division, and A. Philip Randolph, National President. The luncheon was presided over by Dr. Chas. Wesley Burton who made appropriate introductory remarks. An inspiring talk was given by Miss Mary McDowell, a staunch friend of the union. All ladies present expressed their interest in and desire to help the porters in particular and black labor in general, to exercise the right of self-organization, to win decent wages, hours of work and working conditions, and to play their part in ushering in the new day of economic freedom for all peoples, regardless of race, creed or nationality. Mrs. Irene Gaines, prominent club-woman, was chosen as the chairman of the Cooperating Committee.

This affair was followed by another delightful luncheon in the Poro Dining Room, initiated and supervised by Mrs. Edith Sampson, prominent young social leader. On this occasion A. Philip Randolph, national president, spoke on world problems and labor to some twenty of Chicago's leading society women, and they pledged their cooperation in assisting the fight of the porters by helping to make the dance planned for April 5, in Bacon's Casino, a success. Dr. Charles Wesley Burton and M. P. Webster were present and made comments. Many questions were asked by the women about labor and world problems. The ladies present at this affair are also serv-

ing as patronesses of the dance. One of the most significant phases of the women's attitude toward the Brotherhood's fight, is their apparent interest in the ideas and philosophy of the movement. This is most hopeful.

Friday, March 18, in the Brotherhood's Headquarters, at the call of the women's committee, headed by Mrs. Irene Gaines, a large group of women gathered and listened to the story in detail of Pullman exploitation of the porter and the present status of Negro labor as presented by M. P. Webster, Dr. Charles Wesley Burton and A. Philip Randolph. They became enthusiastic in their expressions of interest in the work.

## MEXICAN PULLMAN PORTERS THREATEN STRIKE

The following news item appeared in the California Eagle, Friday, Mar. 4, by Chas. L. Upton, Editor of Railroad Clatter and Coast Doings:

"Mexican Pullman porters and all Mexican employees of the Pullman Company threatened to call a strike to take effect February 29, in Mexico as a protest against the recent wage cut of the Pullman Company. So serious was the situation that the Pullman Company immediately dispatched their industrial relations superintendent, Mr. F. L. Simmons, to Mexico City to negotiate the wage difference with the porters in the hope that the tie-up might be averted. Mr. Simmons arrived in Mexico City February 25. Los Angeles porters operating through cars to Mexico as far as El Paso, where they turned them over to Mexican porters, were warned by the porters not to attempt to operate the cars into Mexico in the event the strike was called. They were told a strike was certain unless the Pullman Company would agree to a satisfactory settlement regarding the cut by February 29th.

This ought to be an interesting lesson to Negro Pullman porters. Whatever the outcome is, the militant spirit of the Mexican porters is commendable. Negro Pullman porters are entirely too docile, servile and submissive. No group of workers has, or ever will secure their economic rights, without the will to fight for them. In the final analysis it is not the Pullman Company but the porters themselves who are their own worse enemy.

## PORTERS' LEADERS ADDRESS WHITE FORUMS

Sunday evening, March 13, M. P. Webster addressed the Forum of a Congregational church of Chicago on the Case of the Pullman Porter. Sunday, March 20, he spoke on the fight of the Brotherhood before the Forum of the Abraham Lincoln Center of Chicago.

A. Philip Randolph addressed Forums in the Oak Park Congregational Church, February 14, the Chicago Forum in December, Jewish People's Institute in February and filled three forum engagements in Cincinnati. He addressed the Social the Y. W. C. A., and will address the Inter-Racial Commission, March 27th.

## BROTHERHOOD FORMS NUCLEUS IN CINCINNATI

While in Cincinnati on speaking engagements, Brother Randolph organized the nucleus for a Brotherhood local in that city. This is the first time that the union has been able to get any of the porters together in Cincinnati. Brother P. [unclear], a former porter, who resigned recently, will serve as organizer, under the regional zone supervision, of Bennie Smith, second vice president. Bro. Randolph also held a conference with the officials of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks on the injunction case while there. Much material was secured from the Clerks' Union which will be helpful in the porters' fight.

## BROTHERHOOD TO HEAR CLERKS' RESEARCH DIRECTOR

Plans are afoot to have Brother Oliver, research director of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks to address a meeting of the Brotherhood in the headquarters of the Chicago Division on the injunction fight of the clerks against the company union of the Texas and New Orleans Railroad.

He will make a special interpretation of the meaning of the U. S. Supreme Court decision to railway employees with a special reference to Pullman porters.

## THE SOCIAL CLUB

Every two weeks in the Headquarters of the Chicago Division, a social evening is staged for the entertainment of the porters, their wives and friends. These affairs are developing a fine spirit of fellowship among the men.



## THE BLACK WORKER

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**BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS**  
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No. I

## ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BROTHERHOOD

1. Maintenance of organization for five years.
2. Chartered affiliation with the American Federation of Labor.
3. Securing two million dollars wage increase or \$120 a year more than when Brotherhood began for 12,000 men.
4. Mobilization of organized American labor behind fight of porters.
5. Awakening and informing of public opinion of wages and conditions of work of porters.
6. Development of first National Negro Labor Union in America.
7. Publication of the BLACK WORKER, only mouthpiece of black labor in America.
8. Securing of economic survey of wages, rules and working conditions of Pullman porters by the Labor Bureau, Inc., of New York City.
9. Publication of survey of Brotherhood and the Employee Plan by Federal Council of Churches of Christ.
10. Organization of ladies auxiliaries or Colored Women's Economic Councils to express ideals of Brotherhood and support the fight.
11. Development of the National Negro Labor Conference.
12. Marked change of attitude expressed in more consideration by Pullman officials for porters.
13. Presentation of case of porters for more wages and better working conditions to United States Meditation Board.
14. Presentation of case of porters for more wages and better working conditions, by way of investigation of the Pullman Company, to Interstate Commerce Commission.
15. The break down of opposition among Negroes to Brotherhood's fight.
16. The securing of the support and cooperation of leading national Negro organizations, church and press.
17. The securing of the adoption of a resolution condemning lynching mob law and industrial discrimination in the 50th Convention of the American Federation of Labor in Boston.
18. Filing of petition for permanent injunction to overthrow the Employee Representation Plan of the Pullman Company in the Federal District Court, October 16th, compelling the Pullman Company to file an answer thereto, argument on which will come up in trial of case in the near future.
19. Speeches of William Green, President of the A. F. L. to Negro Mass Meetings for Porter's rights in New York and Chicago.

## LIVE-WIRE CLUB DOING EFFECTIVE WORK

The Live-Wire Club, under its efficient leadership, continues to keep the national headquarters in New York alive with interest. It stages some of the most entertaining and profitable affairs that are held in the country for the union.

## TOTTEN MAKING VIGOROUS FIGHT IN NEW YORK DISTRICT

Immediately the wage cut was announced, A. L. Totten, Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, launched a vigorous attack in the white press, exposing the bad faith of the Pullman Company in dealing with the porters in the matter. By a logical and cogent statement of the case, he exacted some important material from the United States Meditation Board which will be of great service to the porters' injunction case. Stirred by the heartless repression of the Company, porters are manifesting a new the will to carry on with the Brotherhood. Delinquent members are renewing their allegiance and porters, formerly indifferent, are joining the movement.

## "MYSELF"

I have to live with myself and so  
 I want to be fit for myself to know,  
 I want to be able as the days go by  
 Always to look myself straight in the  
 eye;  
 I don't want to stand with the setting  
 sun  
 And hate myself for the things I  
 have done.

I don't want to keep on a closet shelf  
 Full of secrets about myself,  
 And fool myself, as I come and go,  
 Into thinking that nobody else will  
 know  
 The wind of a man I really am;  
 I don't want to dress myself up in  
 sham.

I want to go out with my head erect,  
 I want to deserve all men's respect;  
 But here in the struggle for fame  
 and help

I want to be able to like myself.  
 I don't want to look at myself and  
 know  
 That I'm bluster and bluff and empty  
 show.

I never can hide myself from me,  
 I see what others may never see  
 I know what others may never know,  
 I never can fool myself, and so,  
 Whatever happens, I want to be  
 Self respecting, and conscience free."

—Arthur Unknown

Have A Good Time for A Good Cause

—: AT THE: —

FOURTH ANNUAL SPRING FROLIC

—: of the : —

BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

Tuesday Evening, April 5, 1932

At BACON'S CASINO, Wabash Ave. at 49th St.

Music by ROBERTS' HARMONY SYNCOPATORS

Dancing 10 p. m. until—

Admission Price 50c