

CARTON 9:12

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

"C.L. Dellums and the Struggle
for Racial Justice" Presentation
by Robert Allen

2006

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Dellums talk

Thanks / Congrats to Steve Kitter
+ Labor Center for setting up Dellums
Labor school to bring together organizers,
researchers, and community people

Dellums & B. B. Thomas brought sea change in
labor and race relations in U.S. Role of black labor
union in shaping
national policy

1 - Founding of BSOP (1945) and ^{hard but} successful
struggle to be recognized by Pullman Co (1957)
First time ever done

2 - 1941 MOWM
Impact on jobs - Growth of W-Coast
A.A. Community

3 - 1946-1959 Dellums long fight to get
Calif FEPC

4 - ~~President~~ ^{organizing} Leadership
Civil Rights Movement
Dellums - 1948 NAACP Regional Director
1955 RB, Nixon - Montgomery
1963 March on Washington
(role model for Ron Dellums)

~~Dellums~~
Conclusion - Dellums epitomizes genius of BSOP Leadership
Philosophy / strategy of BSOP as embedded
in community - shared concerns / issues
= Unity & mutual support / solidarity

Lessons for unions today seeking to organize
new constituencies across race, gender, ethnic lines
^{organized} Labor can ~~no longer~~ ^{not expect to} thrive without addressing
community concerns - health, child care, education, housing,
civil rights, immigrant rights

C.L. Dellums and the Struggle for Racial Justice 2/25/06

By Robert L. Allen, Ph.D.
African American & Ethnic Studies Departments
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C.L. Dellums and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union (BSCP) helped to precipitate a sea change in labor and race relations in California and the nation. Fundamental issues of unfair employment practices, discrimination, and segregation were confronted in new ways by new forces with consequences not just for the African American community but for all people. For the first time in U.S. history a black labor organization played a central role in shaping labor and civil rights policy.

① The BSCP, the first national (and international) union of black workers, was founded in 1925 with A. Philip Randolph as president. C.L. Dellums who worked as a porter in Oakland, became the West Coast organizer and was elected vice president in 1929 and held that position until 1966, when he succeeded Randolph as president. In 1937 the BSCP made history when it compelled one of the largest U.S. corporations - the Pullman Company - to recognize and negotiate a contract with a black workers' union. This was unprecedented and almost inconceivable in the context of prior U.S. history. CL Dellums was not only a labor leader. In 1948 he was elected the first West Coast Regional Director of the NAACP. He also led the 14 year struggle to get a fair employment practices law passed in California.

② At the beginning of World War II in 1941 the leadership of the BSCP, with the support of civil rights leaders, pushed U.S. President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 requiring the ending of discrimination in defense industries. Again this was virtually unthinkable and had never happened before. Tens of thousands of black men and women would be hired to work alongside whites in wartime plants across the nation. California, especially, would be completely transformed by the dramatic growth of defense industries and with them the formation of new, vibrant African American communities in cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, Vallejo, and Los Angeles -- communities that would have enormous and enduring impact on the economic, social and political fabric of the region and indeed the nation.

③ Beginning in 1946 Dellums mobilized labor and community support for what would become a 14-year campaign to get the state of California to create a fair employment practices commission to monitor the implementation of anti-discrimination measures throughout the state. The successful struggle for the FEPC was part of the emerging era of civil rights activism and legislative initiatives in California and elsewhere.

④ It is difficult to overstate the importance of the BSCP and its leadership to the emergence of the modern civil rights era. Leaders of the BSCP, including Dellums in California and E.D. Nixon in Montgomery, would bring their organizing skills to bear in the emerging struggles of the civil rights movement, giving that movement the benefit of years of experience in confronting entrenched power. Indeed, the union played a major role in organizing the 1963 march on Washington that would help secure passage of the historic 1964 Civil Rights Act. (In passing, it must also be noted that C.L. Dellums was a role model of his nephew, civil rights activist and former Congressman Ronald V. Dellums.) The success of the civil rights movement depended on an alliance of labor, civil rights, and other progressive forces. The BSCP was at the center of this alliance-building process, and C.L. Dellums was at the center of the BSCP.

In my view C.L. Dellums epitomizes the leadership genius of the BSCP. Dellums and Randolph developed and honed a leadership philosophy and strategy that was powerful and effective. For Dellums, especially, the union was deeply embedded in the community. That is, the Brotherhood regarded the union's concerns as community concerns and community issues as union issues, especially issues of racial discrimination. The Brotherhood was part and parcel of the African American community. (It is significant that Dellums put the BSCP office smack in the middle of West Oakland.) Therein lay the strength of the union and the high regard for its leadership in the African American community. But the Brotherhood was embedded not only in the black community in Oakland, it was organically connected through its leadership and members with the civil rights community, regionally and nationally, the labor movement, the progressive community and progressive leaders in churches and synagogues, civil liberties groups, political parties. Dellums was thereby able to mobilize resources for the long and hard struggle with the Pullman Company, and the protracted struggle to get a fair employment practices law passed.

In his life and work we find keys to understanding how a union successfully mobilized its members and tens of thousands of other ordinary working people to change the employment and civil rights policies of the state and the nation. As the new unions of today seek to unite workers across racial and ethnic lines, and as more women of all races come into the labor movement, it is notable that community issues such as health care, child care, education, affordable housing, civil rights, immigrants rights, and other public policy issues are increasingly seen as union issues. For the labor movement to grow it is no longer possible to separate union issues from community issues. C.L. Dellums understood this crucial reality and he developed a strategy for insuring unity and mutual support between the community and the union. This is a powerful lesson for the labor movement today.

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NARRATIVE of proposal for a study of the influence of C.L. Dellums and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union in Shaping Employment and Civil Rights Policy in California

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C.L. Dellums and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union (BSCP) helped to precipitate a sea change in race and labor relations in California and the nation. Fundamental issues of unfair employment practices, discrimination and segregation were confronted in new ways by new forces with consequences not just for the black community but for all people. For the first time in U.S. history a black labor organization, its leaders and organizers, played a central role in shaping labor and civil rights policy.

Today, as the demographics of the working population in California and throughout the nation, are undergoing dramatic changes, new unions are facing the challenge of uniting people of different races and ethnic backgrounds to constructively impact public policy. Many of these constituencies (for example, immigrants, various communities of color, and youth) have little or no prior experience with labor organizations. The BSCP struggled successfully to organize and mobilize a new constituency of black workers. An examination of the history of the BSCP and the leadership of C.L. Dellums can offer important lessons with regard to bringing new constituencies into today's union movement and mobilizing the movement as a social base from which to fight for progressive changes in public policy.

The BSCP, the first national union of black workers, was founded in 1925 with A. Philip Randolph as president. C.L. Dellums was elected vice president in 1929 and held that position until 1966, when he succeeded Randolph as president. Dellums was also elected the first West Coast Regional Director of the NAACP in 1948, and he served for 20 years as a key member of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission.

In 1937 the BSCP made history when it compelled one of the largest U.S. corporations - the Pullman Company - to recognize and negotiate a contract with a black workers' union. This was unprecedented and almost inconceivable in the context of prior U.S.

history. This victory would in turn give a great impetus to black organizing in other arenas, including the civil rights movement.

At the beginning of World War II in 1941 the leadership of the BSCP, with the support of civil rights leaders, pushed U.S. President Roosevelt to issue an executive order requiring the ending of discrimination in defense industries. Again this was virtually unthinkable and had never happened before. Tens of thousands of black men and women would be hired to work alongside whites in wartime plants across the nation. California, especially, would be transformed by the explosive growth of defense industries and with them the formation of new, vibrant black communities in cities such as San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles -- communities that would have enormous and enduring impact on the economic, social and political fabric of the region and indeed the nation.

In the following years Dellums mobilized labor and community support to successfully conduct a 14-year campaign to get the state of California in 1959 to create a fair employment practices commission to monitor the implementation of anti-discrimination measures throughout the state. The successful struggle for the FEPC was part of the emerging era of civil rights activism and legislative initiatives in California and elsewhere.

Leaders of the BSCP, including Dellums in California and E.D. Nixon in Montgomery, would bring their organizing skills to bear in the emerging struggles of the civil rights movement, giving that movement the benefit of years of experience in confronting entrenched power. In so doing they would shape emerging public policy in the civil rights arena. In passing, it must also be noted that C.L. Dellums was a role model of his nephew, civil rights activist and former Congressman Ronald V. Dellums.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the BSCP and its leadership to the emergence of the modern civil rights era. Having used the threat of a mass march on Washington in 1941 to secure Roosevelt's ground-breaking executive order, the union would play a critical role in organizing the 1963 march on Washington that would help secure passage of the historic 1964 Civil Rights Act. The success of the civil rights movement depended on an alliance of liberal, labor and civil rights forces. The BSCP was at the center of this alliance-building process, and C.L. Dellums was at the center of the BSCP. In his life and work we find keys to understanding how a

union successfully mobilized its members and tens of thousands of other ordinary working people to change the employment and civil rights policies of the state and the nation. As the new unions of today seek to unite workers across racial and ethnic lines to impact public policy regarding employment, civil rights, and immigration, among other issues, study of the history of the BSCP and the leadership of C. L. Dellums can offer valuable lessons.

There are several published works on aspects of the BSCP and its leaders including, A Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait, by Jervis Anderson; Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters, by Jack Santino; Those Pullman Blues: An Oral History of the African American Railroad Attendant, by David D. Perata; and Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, by Melinda Chateauvert. While these all are excellent works none of them focusses specifically on the impact of the BSCP on labor and civil rights policy in California. Nor do any of them give serious attention to the crucial role played by C.L. Dellums.

The proposed study will be a significant contribution to the literature on the BSCP, and, importantly, the literature on the relationship between union leadership and the formation of public policy.

The research methodology will involve study of historical records in archives including the C.L. Dellums Papers and the Papers of the BSCP held in the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, Papers of the BSCP in the Library of Congress and the Schomburg Center in New York, records of the FEPC in the Library of Congress and the California State Library, and the archives of the NAACP. Published studies of civil rights legislation will also be examined. Where possible, interviews will be conducted with individuals associated with Dellums and the BSCP.

Rowland & Littlefield, a respected publishing firm, has made a commitment to publish a book based on my research.

The research will be undertaken by the principal investigator with the help of a part-time research assistant.

Importance of Dellums book

October 18, 2000

The importance of this book for general readers lies in the fact that C.L. Dellums and the Brotherhood helped precipitate a sea change in race relations in the U.S. Fundamental issues of unfair employment practices, discrimination and segregation were to be confronted in new ways by new forces with consequences not just for the black community but for the nation as a whole. For the first time in U.S. history a black labor organization, and its leaders and organizers, would play the leading role in shaping labor and civil rights policy and push traditional civil rights groups, like the NAACP, to adopt more militant stands.

C.L. Dellums, A. Philip Randolph and the leaders of the Brotherhood built the first national union of black workers and compelled one of the largest U.S. corporations – the Pullman Company in 1937 – to recognize and negotiate a contract with a black workers' union, something almost inconceivable in the context of prior U.S. history. This victory would in turn give a great impetus to black organizing in other arenas, including the civil rights movement.

The leadership of the Brotherhood pushed a U.S. President (Roosevelt at the beginning of WWII) to issue an executive order requiring the ending of discrimination in defense industries. Again this was virtually unthinkable and had never happened before. Tens of thousands of black workers would be hired to work alongside whites in wartime plants across the nation. The West Coast, especially, would be transformed by the explosive growth of defense industries and with them the formation of new, restless black communities in cities such as San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles, communities that would have enormous and enduring impact on the economic, social and political fabric of the region and indeed the nation.

The leadership of the Brotherhood (Dellums) would successfully conduct a 14-year campaign to get the bellwether state of California in 1959 to create a fair employment practices commission to monitor the implementation of anti-discrimination measures throughout the state. This set the tone for the coming era of civil rights activism and legislative initiatives in California.

Organizers of the Brotherhood, such as Dellums in California and E.D. Nixon in Montgomery, would bring their organizing skills to bear in the emerging struggles of the civil rights movement, giving that movement the benefit of years of experience in confronting entrenched power. For example, Nixon is the person who organized and guided the first protest meetings after Rosa Parks was arrested, and he recruited Martin Luther King Jr., then an unknown young minister, into the movement.

It is difficult to overstate the importance the importance of the Brotherhood and its leadership to the emergence of the modern civil rights era. The success of the civil rights movement depended on an alliance of liberal, labor and civil rights forces. The Brotherhood was at the center of this alliance-building process, and C.L. Dellums was at

the center of the Brotherhood. In his life we find keys to understanding how ordinary people mobilized in struggle could, and did, change the nation.

First draft

INTRODUCTION

“Our reason for [the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union (BSCP)] going in the AF of L was because as a labor union we belonged inside. We believed then and still believe that the Negro will never really be a first-class citizen until he is in the mainstream and all of its tributaries of American life. Organized labor is one of the mainstreams of American life. . . . We belonged in the mainstream of the labor movement and the mission was to drive the official discrimination out. We didn’t stop the fight until the color bar was removed from every union’s constitution or ritual. So officially there was no discrimination left in the trade union movement. But obviously there was discrimination left because it is run by American white people. I haven’t found anything yet they run without discrimination – including the church. So the national mission is still here. It will not be solved in my lifetime. But I still hope to make some contribution to it.”

--- C.L. Dellums, 1971

For five decades Cottrell Laurence (or LAWRENCE?) Dellums, or “C.L.” as he was known to friends and co-workers, was a member of the national leadership team of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union (BSCP) and the leader of its West Coast division. During that period he helped to build the BSCP into the most powerful African American labor union in the nation. He accomplished much more than merely making “some” contribution to the struggle against discrimination in the labor movement. He was also a key leader in the struggle to advance civil rights and social justice generally in California and the nation. His work as chairman of the West Coast Region of the National Association for

the Advancement of Color People and his determined leadership of a 14-year long and ultimately successful struggle to get a Fair Employment Practice law passed in California placed him in the forefront of civil rights leaders.

SEE BIRTH CERTIFICATE MARVA HAS

Dellums was always ^{naturally} ~~well~~ dressed, often ^{sporting} wearing a three-piece suit and tie. He was a member of that group of labor leaders who believed that personal and organizational success was facilitated by personal appearance and demeanor. Dellums thought that a well-groomed successful-looking leader who carried himself with dignity and spoke with confidence would have a leg up in confronting employers who sought to intimidate workers with the ^{trappings} of bourgeois respectability. He played the game well and never let the bosses get the upper hand in that public arena of contestation that sociologist Erving Goffman referred to as the "presentation of self in everyday life." (FOOTNOTE) Dellums developed an affected manner of speaking that communicated East Coast, Ivy League education. (Ron Dellums interview, 12-13) At the same time, he could swear like a sailor when that suited his purpose

Dellums' success as a civil rights leader stemmed from his ability to use his base in the BSCP as a foundation for launching other campaigns. In effect, he leveraged his BSCP position into other arenas of struggle. This was a choice he made to move into the broader struggle of civil rights struggles. But among BSCP leaders he was not alone in making this choice. Most notably, Randolph himself was known for his involvement in multiple struggles from XXXX to XXX (EXAMPLES). In Montgomery Alabama in the 1955, BSCP leader E.D. Nixon would play a critical role in organizing the Montgomery bus boycott. OTHER EXAMPLES?

C.L. Dellums was born on January 3, 1900, in Corsicana, Texas, a town in the north central part of the state about 60 miles south of Dallas and the locale of the first Texas oil boom. The discovery of oil in 1894 had made the town prosperous and its population had almost doubled from five thousand in 1885 to over nine thousand inhabitants. The town had a substantial African American population, large enough even in 1885 to support three black churches (SEE TOWN WEBSITE)) Young Dellums' father was William Henry Dellums. Of Native American and Caucasian ancestry, William supported his family through various jobs including insurance

salesman and barber. William's father, a white man remembered in the family only by the name was Fortson. William's mother, remembered as Grandma Kitty, was part Indian. William, who was born out of wedlock, was raised by step-parents and he took their last name, Dellums. William Dellums was a stubborn, industrious man who had dreams of better things for his family. He worked as an insurance salesman and at one time he owned a small barber shop. In African American communities the barber shop is a center for the exchange of news, political discussion, and male comraderie. In his father's barber shop young Dellums would have been exposed to a world in which black men spoke freely and knowingly about issues of the day, their encounters with white society, and their aspirations for themselves and their families. It was a world in which black men saw themselves as agents, not simply victims or pawns. Young Dellums would have been welcome in this world, and it would give him an ease and familiarity with black language and culture. This familiarity was enhanced later when as a young man in Corsicana Dellums followed in his father's footsteps and joined the all-black Prince Hall Masons.

Dellums' mother, Emma, was of African American, Indian and Irish ancestry. (ANY MORE INFO ON EMMA'S BACKGROUND?)
(Dellums identified strongly as an African American and although

he never sought any color privilege as some light-skinned blacks did, he was proud of his multiracial heritage. Once when he encountered a white person who boasted that his ancestors came over on the Mayflower, Dellums bluntly responded "And my ancestors met them!" (Marva, p. 381) Emma had her hands full with children. She gave birth to a total of fourteen children, although most of them, including a couple of multiple siblings, didn't survive beyond birth or early childhood. The only children to reach adulthood were Dellums' younger brother Verney, and two older brothers, Burnette and Jim. (Marva interview, p. 2) With little formal education but literate and highly intelligent, Emma would play a central role the formation of young Dellums' character. She loved to read, and she enjoyed reading biblical stories to her children, making the stories seem to come alive. She had a natural speaking ability, perhaps honed in the Colored Methodist Episcopal church (VERIFY) that she attended. She coached her sons in public speaking and debating with such success that young Dellums and his older brothers won several debating awards in high school. (Marva, p. 8-9) Debating taught Dellums the art of verbal confrontation and it gave him self confidence in challenging opponents. It also gave him an early insight into the power of language to inspire, motivate and change human consciousness. It was his mother whom he had to

thank for these verbal skills and confidence in the face of opposition. Dellums' speaking ability and sonorous voice would serve him well when he began his organizing career.

Dellums attended the segregated public schools in Corsicana (GET SCHOOL NAMES, RECORDS) He liked to read and he had hopes of going on to college. While in high school Dellums had a confrontation with the local draft board when they tried to pressure him into going into the Student Army Training Corps. He knew of the racial discrimination in the Army and that the only jobs open to blacks were as truck drivers and other service positions so he did not wish to go into the military. Displaying the keen, practical intelligence that would be his hallmark as a labor leader, he obtained a copy of the Selective Service Act and discovered that so long as there were sufficient numbers of volunteers, which there was, the draft board could not compel him to join the training program. So he refused to go. Instead he said he wanted to join the Air Corps, knowing full well that no Negroes were being accepted into the Air Corps. His tactic kept him out of the military and provided a valuable early lesson in how to successfully maneuver against a powerful opponent in a bureaucratic system.

Dellums worked for a time as a waiter at a hotel in Dallas, but he was fired when he refused to serve a customer who offended him.

(Matva 12) Aside from agricultural work and menial jobs there was little work for an ambitious young black man in Texas. Dellums had heard that there were lots of opportunities in California so he decided to take a train to San Francisco in 1923. By now his father had died, but Dellums inherited his father's dreams. (DEATH CERTIFICATE?) He had hopes of attending the University of California and becoming a lawyer. But first he had to find work. A porter on the train told him that jobs for blacks were also limited in San Francisco and he would do better to look for work in Oakland. Dellums found work for a short time as a room steward on a vessel of the Pacific Steamship Company plying the coastwise trade. But the pay was poor, the working conditions deplorable, and he was prone to seasickness. Dellums went to the railroad yard in Oakland to try getting work as a waiter on a dining car. No waiters were being hired, but as luck would have it, the Pullman company was hiring porters for its sleeping cars.

In the black community porters were considered a kind of labor aristocracy. Porters wore sharp uniforms, they traveled all over the country and associated with wealthy white people, their hands were not marred by hard agricultural or industrial labor, and some of them saved enough money to buy their own homes. The only other job the average black man could get that carried such prestige was

that of a letter carrier in the U.S. Post Office. Indeed many well educated black men, including college graduates, found themselves working as porters or letter carriers because racial discrimination barred them from the professions for which they were trained. Landing a job as a Pullman porter might have seemed a lucky break at first, but Dellums would soon discover that porters were poorly paid, mistreated by the Company, and subjected to demeaning racial stereotypes that put them at the mercy of passengers and company supervisors alike.

C.L. Dellums got his job as a porter just over a year and a half before the formation of the great black labor union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, that would be at the center of his life. The organization of the Brotherhood marked a turning point in the long history of African American workers in the railway industry. It brought a group of black railway workers into a union that they initiated and controlled, an organization that would not only transform the consciousness of the porters and bring them important improvements in wages and working conditions, but it would have impact far beyond the labor movement. The Brotherhood in fact became a training ground for activists and

leaders in the black civil rights movement, of which Dellums would be one example. E.D. Nixon, who played a critical role in organizing the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott is another example. Through the national political interventions of its president, A Philip Randolph, whose influence stemmed from the power of the union, the Brotherhood also contributed to the racial desegregation of U.S. industry (and the military) and the transformation of black industrial labor from a peripheral to a central position in the U.S. economy. By opening jobs it also paved the way for the westward movement of tens of thousands of black workers during World War II and the growth of major urban centers of the African American population on the West Coast. Out of these urban centers would emerge a new black militancy as manifested, for example, in the Watts rebellion, the formation of the Black Panther Party, and the rise of a new generation of political leaders such as Ronald Dellums, Maxine Waters and Barbara Lee. That a relatively small African American labor union was able to leverage such major social changes is truly astonishing. C.L. Dellums was among a core group of leaders who were at the heart of these historic developments.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the rise of the railroad as a major means of transportation and a huge industry created new opportunities for employment for freedmen following

the Civil War. In particular, the completion in 1869 of the transcontinental railroad, with its terminus in Oakland, and the general growth of long distance railway travel spurred the development of the sleeping car, on which various arrangements could be made for passengers to sleep on something other than a chair on a days-long railroad trip. One of the pioneers in designing and building the new sleeping cars was George M. Pullman. Pullman realized there was a potentially huge market for a sleeping car designed to offer first-rate comfort to ordinary travelers. His breakthrough design, aptly named the Pioneer, was a kind of luxury hotel on wheels. The Pioneer immediately garnered public attention in 1865 when it was used in the funeral train that carried Abraham Lincoln's body from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, Ohio. (Perata, Pullman Blues, p.xvi) With the addition of dining cars and club cars it was possible to travel the length and breadth of the country in pampered ease and comfort.

The job of pampering customers and assuring their comfort, Pullman decided, could best be performed by black people. (Brazeal, p. 1-2) Drawing on paternalistic plantation traditions that had stereotyped black domestic workers as servile, pleasant, and uncomplaining, Pullman hired large numbers of black men as porters -- and fewer black women as maids -- to serve the needs of

whites travelling on his sleeping cars. By 1926 the Pullman Company was the largest single employer of African American workers, with over ten thousand porters and two hundred maids. (Perata, xvi-xix; Chateauvert, *Marching Together*, 20-23)

For the black men and women working for Pullman, wages were low and working hours long. In 1925 the basic pay for a porter was sixty dollars a month and fifty dollars for a maid. Out of this they were expected to pay for uniforms and other expenses, including meals and lodging while on the road. They might work up to 400 hours a month without any overtime pay. And their time on the clock started only when the train pulled out of the station. Time spent in preparing a car for a trip and cleaning it after one did not count. While these wages were better than those for black agricultural and domestic workers, they still fell far below what the U.S. Department of Labor considered a decent wage for a family at that time (\$2,000 a year) (Randolph, "Case of Pullman Porter," *Messenger*, July, 1925, p. 254; Perata, xxvii; Chateauvert, 27) Of course, porters were expected to make up the difference from passengers' tips. The practice of relying on tipping further demeaned the porters' and maids' status. The need to solicit tips sometimes pushed porters into the degrading role of grinning, kowtowing "Uncle Toms." White passengers routinely referred to all

porters as "George," as though they were all George Pullman's "boys." This was a continuation of the dehumanizing plantation practice of calling a slave by his master's name. Porters countered by posting their names, with first initials and last name, at the front of each car. (Chateauvert, 28-29) It was the custom of the Pullman Company to reward porters for years of service by allowing them to wear a stripe on their right sleeve for every five years of employment. But the porters wanted more than stripes. "Rights which the company is bound to respect are more important than stripes which only represent an empty honor," Randolph wrote in an article in 1925 as the organizing drive was about to begin. (Brazeal, fn, p. 15, Randolph, *ibid*, p. 255)

Efforts to organize the Pullman porters began as early as 1909. (Brazeal, p. 6) With a general upsurge in labor and civil rights organizing (the NAACP began forming in 1909) porters were less willing to passively accept continued low wages, long hours, and demeaning treatment. These initial efforts were largely unsuccessful, but they prompted the Pullman Company to try to head off organizing by setting up a company union called the Employee Representation Plan. The company also formed a Pullman Porters Benefit Association "to mutually improve and uplift the moral and financial conditions of its members." (Brazeal, 12) Such financial aid

that the PPBA offered was paid for by the Porters' dues, not the company, but the social activities it organized served to distract porters attention away from their working conditions. (Perata, xxix) Porters who sought to continue independent organizing efforts were fired or subject to other reprisals.

By 1925 some of the militant porters, including Ashley Totten in New York, decided that the only way the porters could organize was to find a leader for the effort who was not a Pullman employee and therefore not subject to company pressure. Totten and some other porters presented their problem to A. Philip Randolph. (Randolph bio, Jervis Anderson, 153-5) Randolph, as he himself later noted, seemed an ideal candidate for the organizing job because he had long been an advocate of organized labor, he was not employed by Pullman, and he had his own magazine, the *Messenger*, which could help publicize the conditions of the porters. (Randolph, "The Truth about the BSCP," *Messenger*, February, 1926, p. 37)

The son of an African Methodist Episcopal minister, Randolph was born in Crescent City, Florida on April 15, 1889. Two years later the family moved to Jacksonville where Randolph spent his childhood. From his parents young Randolph learned to be proud of his black heritage, the importance of education and clear speech, and the necessity of joining with others to resist racist injustice and

violence. (Jervis Anderson, p 32-43) In 1911, at 22 years of age, Randolph left home and went to New York City, supposedly for the summer, but he would end up staying there. He attended the City College of New York and the Rand School of Economics where he encountered socialist ideas and the works of Karl Marx. (Harris, 28-9) He met and married Lucille Green, a widow who worked as a beauty shop operator and who would provide much of the financial support for the two of them as Randolph pursued a growing interest in radical activism, labor organizing, and journalism. His partner in many of these activities was Chandler Owen, who had been a student of political science and sociology at Columbia University. Randolph and Owen founded the *Messenger* in 1917 as an independent magazine of radical economic and political thought. Unlike many of their other ventures, the *Messenger* was relatively successful. (Harris, 28-35) Randolph became known not only for his radical ideas and militant writing but also for his cultured speaking style.

At a mass meeting of 500 porters in New York City on August 25, 1925 Brother of Sleeping Car Porters was officially launched with Randolph as General Organizer. The next day another 200 sought membership (Jervis Anderson, 168-9; FIRST ORGANIZING DRIVE, Randolph, *Messenger*, 2/26, p. 37.) With the crucial help of a

\$10,000 grant from the liberal Garland Fund, the Brotherhood was able to hire several organizers, set up a headquarters, and launch an organizing drive. The grant also helped subsidize the *Messenger*, which became the voice of the new union. (brazeal, 19-20)

As the terminus of the transcontinental railroad and a place where many porters made their homes, Oakland was an important target for the BSCP organizing drive. A crusty old-timer, a retired porter in his late seventies named Morris Moore, volunteered to organize the Oakland division. Well known to all the porters as "Dad" Moore, he was unafraid of the company. When Randolph came to Oakland in early 1926 as part of the organizing drive, Dad Moore met him. At the first organizing meeting Randolph greatly impressed Moore and other porters including Dellums. In follow-up meetings many porters joined the BSCP, an organizing committee was formed, and a women's auxiliary was organized. Randolph was also invited to speak to students and faculty at the University of California. (jervis anderson, 176, *Messenger*, April, 1926, p. 122). Dellums got involved in recruiting porters to join the union, sometimes going into speak-easys, a favorite hang-out, but not before first removing his Mason's ring for the sake or propriety.

(Marva, 15) Dellums admired Dad Moore and proved to be an able assistant to the old man.

As an organizer for the union Dellums had to know that his days of employment by the Pullman Company were limited. Though he may have wished to keep his job, he never let that deter him from expressing his misgivings about the Company's treatment of porters. It was the custom on the trains for the porters to have their meals in the dining car, but behind a curtain that segregated them from the passengers. One day Dellums ripped the curtain down to express his disgust with the demeaning practice. He was reprimanded, of course, and eventually he would be fired – not because of these “scrapes” but because of his union work.

Although retired as a porter, Dad Moore was employed by the Pullman company as caretaker of the sleeping quarters the company maintained on two old sleeping cars for out-of-town porters on overnight stays. When Moore became a union organizer the company took away his job. However, Moore set up his own sleeping quarters operation to support himself and compete with the company. Moore opened a BSCP office in the same building on Seventh Street near the railroad yard. Pullman retaliated by threatening to fire any porter who patronized Moore's rooming house. (Anderson, 179-80) In 1927 Moore suffered a broken rib in

an accident but that didn't deter his organizing efforts in the face of company efforts to force porters to join the company union.

(Messenger, december, 1927, p. 359) This was a hard time for the BSCP, as the company tried to smash the union. Organizers were becoming demoralized and the number of dues-paying members was dropping. Dellums, who was deeply involved in the organizing effort, sought to rally the porters in Oakland. "As long as Randolph stays," he told the men, "I'll stay. And I expect you to stay. He's the brains and spirit. And if there's any way under the sun to win, he'll find it." (anderson, 192-3) Now going by the initials C.L., Dellums had favorably impressed Dad Moore and others with his speaking ability and wit. Though relatively young, he was gaining respect as an organizer.

As Dad Moore declined, Dellums took over more of the business of the Oakland-San Francisco division. By now Dellums, too, had been fired by Pullman - which enabled him to play a public role in the union. The year 1928 witnessed the rise and emergence of Dellums as the de facto head of the division. Almost every issue of the *Messenger* carried an "Activities of the Month" column reporting on work going on in various districts of the union. At the beginning of 1928 Dellums was listed in the column as Local Field Agent with Dad Moore as Organizer. The column also reported that Dad Moore

had recovered from a recent illness and was “back on the firing line.” However, D.J. Jones, the local’s Secretary-Treasurer was “somewhat indisposed” and Dellums was covering for him. The report a couple of months later mentioned that Dellums was presiding over the meetings and “always ready with a militant and constructive speech, which the men enjoy.” By the May-June issue Dellums was listed as Secretary-Treasurer, and although Dad Moore was still listed as Organizer Dellums’ name was at the top of the column. This issue reported that on March 29 a “monstrous mass meeting was held at Brotherhood Headquarters” attended by porters and the women of the Ladies Auxiliary. The union was calling for a strike vote and Dellums gave a rousing speech to rally support. (messengers, 2/28, p 41; 4/28, p 89; 5-6/28, p 113)

The strike vote was a tactic in the union’s struggle to show that the BSCP and not the company union, the Employee Representation Plan, was the legitimate representative of the porters. The matter was before a Board of Mediation that had been invoked in accordance with the 1926 Railway Labor Act, a law that gave railroad workers the right to organize and bargain collectively. When the strike vote took place in April and the overwhelming majority of the porters voted in favor of a strike. The Mediation Board that the BSCP represented the majority of the porters but it

refused to declare an emergency and intervene in the dispute. Although the BSCP had won the strike vote it was still relatively weak and did not have the financial and organizational resources to carry out a full-scale strike. Not being affiliated with the American Federation of Labor the BSCP could not expect help from the white labor movement. In the end the BSCP leadership decided to call off the strike set for June 8th. (brazeal, 77-84) In an assessment many years later Dellums, who at the time was ready to go all out to win the strike, concluded that while the BSCP might have shut down operations in Oakland and certain other cities, the strike would have failed in the rest of the country and threatened the existence of the union. (anderson, 200-201)

The calling off of the strike drew sharp criticism from the Left, especially the Communist Party and the American Negro Labor Congress. Randolph and the BSCP leadership were accused of caving in to the wishes of AFL President William Green, who advised against the strike. (brazeal, *ibid*; Spero & Harris, *The Black Worker*, 455) Following the aborted strike Randolph and the BSCP leadership decided to push harder for AFL affiliation as a way to gain leverage for the BSCP both with Pullman and within the labor movement. However, certain white unions sought to keep the BSCP out of the AFL or to gain control of the porters themselves. William Green was

supportive, but on condition that Randolph disavow any connections with Communists. (harris, 153-4 NOTE: Green also asked Randolph to explain charges that he had mismanaged the *Messenger*, which ceased publication in 1928. The BSCP launched a new publication, *The Black Worker*, in 1929 as the official journal of the union) Even with Green's support the BSCP could only be chartered as 13 separate federal locals, a second-class status used to keep organized black workers under the thumb of a union of white workers in the same occupation. Green promised to continue to help the union, and for the BSCP, at a low point nationally, admission under these terms got the union into the Hose of Labor, and since there was no other union of Pullman porters the BSCP could maintain its autonomy and use its position within the AFL to fight for change. (harris, p. 154-156). As Dellums would put it: "We belonged in the mainstream of the labor movement and the mission was to drive the official discrimination out."

In August, 1929 the BSCP held its first national convention in Chicago and held its first election of officers. C.L. Dellums was formally elected as the seventh of seven vice presidents. He was twenty-nine years old. A few months later, in January, 1930, Dad Moore died following an illness. Dellums, who was already the de facto leader, now formally became the head the Oakland division.

Moreover, as vice president he was responsible for the Pacific Zone, which included Oakland, Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle. His responsibilities included working with and counseling the women's auxiliaries as well. In the coming years he would spend a great deal of time on the road driving up and down the West Coast in his Model A Ford, affectionately known as the "Bug." Along the way he would meet hundreds of porters, as well as civil right activists, labor leaders, religious leaders, and politicians of all stripes. He would develop a huge network of individuals and organizations that could be mobilized on behalf of causes and campaigns that DeLums deemed important to the struggle for social justice.

SITUATION IN OAKLAND, "Dad" Moore and C.L., porters being fired, Perata, xxxii

CL becomes Oakland chief and a vice pres.

Struggle to force recognition from Pullman and get first contract.

CL and organizing drives (see his corres)

March on Washington Movement, Executive order, impact of.

Role of Frances Albrier at Kaiser Richmond, etc. See Visions Toward Tomorrow, her oral history, and Chateaufort

NEXT SECTION

CL's family life: marriage to Walter, her background, role in union, women' auxiliary. (Chateauvert, 45, 95) birth of Marva, her relationship with CL

NEXT SECTION

CL gets involved with NAACP, sample cases

NEXT SECTION

CL and Alameda county labor council

NEXT CL and FEP campaign, CL as FEP commissioner

EPILOGUE

---DELLUMS LEADERSHIP STYLE/LESSONS FOR THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

-- HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SIGNIFICANCE/CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVIL RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE STRUGGLES IN CALIF

-- ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FEPC SINCE 1959

CL Dellums Oral History Chronology

Prepared by Donna Murch

- CL Dellums was born Jan. 3, 1900 in Corsicana Texas.
- In 1923 Dellums arrived in San Francisco and considered it the "ideal place for a Negro to live." University of California's Law school was a big part of the draw. The Bay Area was an unusual choice for black migration. Los Angeles was a much more popular destination. (3)
- Shortly thereafter, exact date not given, Dellums settled in Oakland at 11th and Wood, and was unable to find work to support himself while attending law school. Later he went to work for the Pacific Steamship as a "room steward" for several months. (5)
- In January 1924 Dellums was hired as a porter by the Pullman Company. He made contacts at the Southern Pacific Station.
- Shortly thereafter, Dellums met Lee Williams, the Pullman instructor for new porters. Williams recruited Dellums into the Northern California Branch NAACP for the first time, but he did not become really active until after he was fired by the Pullman Company. While working full time for the Brotherhood Dellums was in town frequently and could work much more actively with the NAACP. Dellums notes that the union the civil rights organization faced similar problems -- people very reluctant to join. (45)
- January 1926, Dellums met A. Philip Randolph for the first time at the Parks Chapel Church in West Oakland at Ninth and Campbell.
- Later that month, Randolph gave a speech in Oakland. (17)
- Together they began organizing the union. (Exact date not given -- check secondary sources). CL quickly became known as the informal leader. Major company targets were Dellums in Oakland and Ashley L. Totten in Kansas City. (11)
- In 1928 the Pullman Company took major retaliation measures against the Brotherhood. They fired forty-five men and suspended forty five others. They transferred work from Oakland to Chicago to cover the labor shortage on the West Coast. The Pullman Company also worked very hard to infiltrate the union. (15)
- A. Philip Randolph was fired by Pullman in this period. (Note clear from Dellums' account whether it is before or after mass firings.) (18)
- In or around July 1928 Randolph began working full-time for the union. (Date uncertain from Dellums' account.)

- Dellums was accused of embezzlement in the union's bonding practices. Randolph gave him the power to audit the books. According to Dellums this incident was related to company spies. After successful resolution, Dellums' pay in the union was raised from twenty dollars a week to twenty-five dollars a week. (19)

-In 1928 the Brotherhood passed a strike vote against the Pullman Company. No win situation because the union was broke and the National Board of Mediation failed to declare an emergency in accordance with the Railway Labor Act. The union was left in lurch, because they couldn't win at that point against Pullman. They needed a way out. Randolph and William Green of AF of L got together. They worked out an agreement that was the beginning of the Brotherhood's affiliation with the national trade union. BSCP agreed not to cancel but to postpone the strike. After these meetings, the AFL accepted 13 local charters and affiliated a select number of unions, not all. They, however, did not operate like normal federal locals. (26-27)

- In September 1929 the first Brotherhood Convention was held in south Chicago. None of the delegates that attended the meeting were current porters. The Pullman Company wouldn't recognize the union's existence, and if porters attended they were immediately fired. Nearly all of the delegates were porters who had been fired for union activity. The convention represented Dellums' first attempt at national/international organizing. At this meeting Brotherhood vice presidents were also elected for the first time. This was a source of some controversy. Milton Webster was elected first VP (in terms of rank), Dellums fourth. According to Dellums, although rank was supposed to be meaningless, it was, nevertheless, a source of discord. They met and elected Roy Lancaster Secretary Treasurer for the first time. He was a controversial character -- some accused him of graft. (21)

-The following year, 1930, the Brotherhood held their convention in St. Louis. Dellums remembered it as "even smaller than the one in 1929." The union was suffering financial difficulties and was forced to eliminate some VP positions and the Secretary Treasurer. They had also lost a number of men and didn't have the money to replace them. (23)

(Somewhere between late Sept 1929 and Sept 1930 -- unclear from text.)

-During the Depression years, the Brotherhood was extremely strapped for cash. They held several fund-raising events with help of Lancaster and his Tammany Hall connections. The first was a baseball game with two Negro teams in Yankee stadium. Portions of proceeds went to the union. The second event pitted Bo Jangles against Joey Ray who was "called the fastest man alive." Dellums said that actually Bill Robinson was the world greatest black runner -- running backwards. To start off the race, organizers gave Ray a 50 yard handicap in a 100 yard race. Although the exact outcome unclear in oral history, Dellums implies that Ray still won. It seems almost as if Dellums doesn't want to mention that directly. (23-24) The third event staged was a midnight benefit for Brotherhood in Harlem theatre, reputedly with help of Tammany Hall. Juicy story -- see account p.24. *(Although exact dates are not mentioned, from Dellums account*

seems as if these events took place in 1929 and 1930, prior to the St. Louis convention.)
Final event in particular was a source of controversy at the convention. (24)

-The West Coast BSCP sponsored its own small events to support the "regional set up." They held several dances a year. They used a segregated (all white) hall. Sweet's Ballroom, the most popular club in Oakland at the time. Dellums persuaded the owner with his usual tact and charm. (24-25)

-In 1929 the Brotherhood joined the AF of L. For many previous years, Randolph had made speeches on the floor of the Union protesting the color bar. They received increasing coverage by the press. "Year after year the debate came more intense and Randolph's speech... was run in the major newspapers around the world. Foreign correspondents began to cover it and wait for it." (26) *(Get Dates and check the Press. Find out how long Randolph had been making those speeches.)*

-Dellums doesn't give date, but mentions that the Brotherhood was accused on the floor of the AF of L of organizing an all black union. Dellums explained that they did not have a choice because of the segregated nature of the workforce. (25) *(Would be interesting to get these proceedings? Where are these AF of L records?)*

- Dellums explains how the Brotherhood changed the union movement: "The Brotherhood became a part of the labor movement and advocated that Negroes join the labor unions and encouraged them to join. Many of them thought they couldn't join unions [sic] that they could join and didn't try because of the general belief that the AF of L discriminated against Negroes." (26)

-It was an on going struggle to desegregate individual unions, for example Culinary Workers International Union or the machinists union, rather than the AF of L itself. Dellums felt strongly about this and likened individual unions to Baptist churches serving their own congregation. National authority had little power over the local; therefore, the focus should be on individual unions. Relatively little of this work was done on the West Coast. machinists were the exception. (28-29)

-Dellums supported the 1934 waterfront strike by participating in meetings to raise morale and maintain the strike and pickets. This was not without danger. A car of teamsters and longshoreman parked outside his house for protection. (69)

-Dellums lent support to the longshoremen in other ways. In 1934, it came to his attention that strike breakers were holding a quiet meeting on 7th St. in Oakland. Longshoremen had asked Dellums to intervene. He went to the meeting with only two bodyguards, worked his way up to the front and "gave them... a good educational talk on labor and civil rights where we had so much in common." His effect was magical, and the strikebreakers agreed to cease and desist and filed out of the meeting. Upon leaving the meeting, Dellums and his body guards saw a number of whites milling about in cars. They were longshoremen and their supporters who had come to lend him extra

protection. (From the tone of the story, it shows clearly how Dellums deep affection for his white union brethren was always tinged with an element of surprise.) (70)

-In 1936 Dellums was elected to the Executive and Arbitration Board in Alameda County's Central Labor Council. Dellums became a delegate to the Central Labor Council after the union received its AF of L charter. This promotion developed Dellums reputation as labor leader. (30)

- In 1936 the Progressive caucus within the Central Labor Council decided to leave Dellums off the slate. He became embroiled in a conflict with the Communists. Quote from Dellums describes his confrontation with them: "Let me tell you damn Commies something, every damn one of you, I'm more progressive than most of you Commies ever will bet. [sic] You don't want me on your ticket because you can't control me." (31)

-Shortly thereafter (1937?). CIO - AF of L split took place and the Central Labor Council had its charter taken away. All of the "so-called militants" got dumped, including Dellums. After that he never held office on the Council again. He only served as a delegate. Dellums did, however, go on to serve on the Alameda Country Labor Political Committee for many years. (32)

-In 1937 the Pullman Company signed its first agreement with the Brotherhood. The agreement took two years working with a federal mediator. Its accomplishments: most importantly the agreement "established the Pullman porter as a human being and a worker" that both the company and the public were bound to respect, regulated hours for the first time, and provided for a nominal pay increase. (25, 30)

-On August 25, 1937 Pullman finally agrees to recognize the BSCP after ten years of struggle. "They weren't at all happy.... That is why I use the expression, we showed them where to sign." (30-33)

-During the 1936 - 1937 strike lockout in the Bay Area, Dellums supported Harry Bridges in the East Bay. (68-70)

-Dellums participated in the campaign to free Tom Mooney. They successfully lobbied Governor Olson to free Tom Mooney in 1939. Dellums helped stage a welcome home celebration for Mooney in the Oakland auditorium, and served as the master of ceremonies. He had been popularly chosen, and the significance was not lost on him. "Some things are done now because we are Negroes. Damn few things were done then because we were Negroes. They were done in spite of us being Negroes!" (33)

-During the Depression Dellums was also active in the low-cost housing movement in Oakland. He worked through Labor's Non-Partisan League to lobby the city council for an enabling resolution to receive federal support for permanent low-cost housing. Dellums worked with other progressive organizations, including the Oakland League of Women Voters. (Might use secondary sources or newspapers to get more exact dates.) (35)

-Dellums got involved in the fight for establishing Campbell Village, which pitted him against an indifferent real estate company. The first phase of the battle consisted of getting the realtors to make more accurate appraisals of homes in West Oakland. The consistently low valuation of homes made owners very resistant to selling, and many people were forced to give up their property with little compensation. Dellums became involved in the negotiations and tried to get homeowners as much money as possible. (37)

-The second phase of the fight for public housing entailed the decision-making process for selecting tenants. Dellums worked together with a black realtor, William P. Butler, to make sure that tenants were "checkerboard" in order to create true integration in the public housing units. The result was a remarkable spirit of unity and cooperation among tenants that led to Campbell Village becoming a national model for integrated public housing. (37)

-Several years later Peralta Village was built. Dellums contrasted this housing development with Campbell. In Peralta they "integrated segregation" – one building Negro and the next white, etc, etc. Dellums used this as an example of what happens when people demobilize after a victory. Without constant vigilance and political organizing, gains are easily lost. "From integration to integrated segregation to lily-whitism." (37) *(Get exact date: Late thirties. early forties?)*

-Dellums later participated in local programs of the National Youth Administration (NYA). He helped open a residence center in Asilomar for children with workshops. While Dellums recognized the need for segregated branches of the NYA in the South, he opposed Bethune's establishment of southern-style Negro sections in the Bay Area. Dellums passed word of his opposition to Senator Downey who spoke with Mary Bethune in D.C... She sent her assistant Dr. Ohara Lenier out to investigate. Dellums met with Lenier, and they proceeded to wine and dine him. Ultimately, he helped craft Lenier's report and recommendations. Thanks to Dellums' actions, Negro sections were eliminated, and several people lost their jobs. This incident showed Dellums' adamance about keeping segregated institutions out of California. (41)
(Exact date uncertain. NYA started in 1935)

-Dellums was later appointed to serve on the State Advisory Committee after the head of the NYA ordered that California branch be restructured. (42)

-War-time 1941

Dellums on the East Bay Draft Board for two years. When Dellums served Warren had just become governor. *(Figure out date.)* (43)

-Dellums served on Legal Redress Committee dealt with various types of discrimination complaints. Started out by compiling a list of unions that discriminated with color clauses in their constitutions. *(Date unclear)*

-1941 was the beginning of battles with the shipyards and other war-time discrimination cases. There were on-going battles with the Oakland Key System, firehouses, and other public employers. Dellums gives a detailed account his successful strategy for opening up shipyards and Key System. Dellums lobbied with his comrade Milton Webster to get blacks employed by the unions and owners, and helped organize community preparation for entrance exams. (50-55)

-In 1945 the NAACP chapters were reorganized. During this year Region One was established which included seven western states, including Hawaii and Alaska. This later became Dellums' region. Noah Griffin was the origin regional secretary, and he was then succeeded by Franklin Williams in 1952. In later years the NAACP was broken down into area conferences. According to Dellums, this had serious ramifications for the organization. (60)

-In 1946 Dellums opposed the initiative for a California FEPC introduced by Gus Hawkins. Dellums objected to the initiative primarily because he thought that people should not have the right to vote on others' rights to live or make a living. "I was quoted saying that it was like wanting me to arbitrate my right to breathe. Nobody would arbitrate his right to breathe nor should they vote on my rights." Also said thought it was futile, and would loose at that time, ultimately setting them back. (58)

-Dellums goes on to make a very important statement about the power of rights. "One, because we should never set a precedent that we recognize that the people have a right to vote on anything they want to vote on. The rights I have been fighting for all my life, they are now called civil rights, God given rights. White people have been using their majority and their control of the law enforcing agencies and firearms to prevent us from exercising our God given rights." (58)

-In 1950 Dellums served as president of the Alameda County Branch of the NAACP. He opened the hearings on police brutality in Oakland with a speech. Dellums notes that he made a much longer statement than was reported in the press. The hearings lasted for three days. Dellums closed the proceedings after grabbing the loudspeaker just as they were about to adjourn to say that he hoped that "something would come out of them." Shortly thereafter, Oakland police chief signed agreement for Dr. Dave McIntyre of U.C. to instruct police in "human relations." (*Would be good to get these press clippings.*) (56)

-In 1951 the NAACP pitched in to help pass the 1951 FEPC bill. Tarea Hall Pittman organized a mobilization in Sacramento and issued a statement in the name of the regional chairman of the NAACP - C. L. Dellums. The NAACP considered the meeting a success, because all the branches of the California NAACP were represented. However, the leadership realized a more permanent statewide organization was needed in order to get a fair employment law on the books.

-In 1952 Dellums met with a number of civil rights activists (many Jewish and/or from labor), including Earl Raab. Leaders were chosen and an informal organization was set up. They later issues a state-wide call to organization to send representatives to meet at Earl Rabb's headquarters. This activity culminated in the first state-wide meeting in Fresno which officially launched the movement for FEPC. The organizing committee was called the Cal Fair Employment Practices Committee. (60-61)

-In 1953 (*Dellums is uncertain about the exact date*) the FEPC bill was introduced into the State Senate and immediately voted down unanimously. Dellums did not see this entirely as a defeat. Because the Senate had been forced to take a stand, the battle lines became more clearly drawn. The committed targeted Senator Abshire, who went on record as opposing the bill. Using their political muscle, the organizers were able to get him voted out of office. This gave them greater political leverage in the long run. (60-62)

-Dellums describes the organizing effort that took place between 1953 and 1959 that made passage of the FEPC bill possible. The Cal Committee sponsored a serious of mobilization that became ever larger through the course of the decade. Influential individuals' like Dr. and Mrs. Clark Kerr became important resources. Mailings to politicians were created using their names in order to link FEPC with recognizable supporters. The majority of the Committee support came from labor. (62-65)

-Throughout this period Dellums financial sustenance came from the BSCP. All of the FEPC work was entirely voluntary. (65)

-Dellums became vice-chairman of the fair employment practices committee in 1964, after he was appointed by the governor. He contrasted the resources of California's FEPC with other states (New York, Michigan and other "civilized states) unfavorably. "My position has been and still is that is the most important commission in this state and has always been treated like the stepchild of state agencies." (66-67)

-Governor Brown reappointed Dellums to the Commission in 1965 for a term expiring in 1969. (68)

-In 1968 A. Philip Randolph stepped down, and nominated Dellums as his successor. He was unanimously elected. In 1971, Randolph again nominated Dellums with the same outcome. (68)

DELLUMS ON DELLUMS

Former Congressman Ronald Dellums, first elected from Berkeley in 1971, wrote in his autobiography, Lying Down With The Lions (Beacon, 2000) of the significance in his life of his uncle, C.L. Dellums: "He loomed larger than life to me. He was a role model of success - well dressed always, he ran an office, had a staff, and was a leader in the community. In fact, C.L. was so well respected throughout his life that although Ronald Reagan, newly elected as Governor of California in 1966, initially considered not reappointing him to the state's Fair Employment Commission, he yielded to the political reality that my uncle could not be denied his place on the commission. By then I was an adult, and it astonished me that somebody as conservative and strong-willed as Reagan would nonetheless feel obligated to seat my uncle - a staunch progressive of equal determination. Then again, as an adult and as a child, I never would have wanted to cross my uncle, and it ultimately made sense to me that neither would Governor Reagan. C.L.'s reappointment left me with the view that with enough political support one could press forward with progressive ideas even in the face of a seemingly implacable adversary." (p. 10)

Speaking of C.L.'s way with words Ron wrote: "C.L.'s erudition and intellect left a powerful impression on me. Although he was handsome and charismatic, clearly it was his mastery of the language that led his union brothers to fall in line under his lead; his mastery of strategy was what kept them loyal to his banner. The political heart of Seventh Street [where many railroad porters lived in Oakland] was my uncle's union office, and I loved to spend time there observing him in action. He touched everything that was happening politically, whether it was the NAACP, the Democratic Party, or the union. Although my family was generally well respected in the neighborhood, C.L. gave magic to the Dellums name throughout Oakland and beyond. It was obvious to me that he was "the man." (p. 14)

INTRODUCTION

for Oral History Interview

When I was requested to write an introduction to the historical interview of C. L. Dellums for The Bancroft Library Oral History Project of the University of California, it seemed an awesome task which I was not prepared to undertake. This was so, not because I do not know the man well enough; not because I had not worked very closely with him for the same goals and objectives over the years; but, because of his great stature as a man who defies description. He is a man who stands tall among tall men in the field of Human Rights. This is so because C. L. Dellums has spent the past five decades helping build bridges of understanding to ease the burden of the poor and disadvantaged. While he had a fierce devotion to the Negro in his struggle against racial discrimination and segregation he was always ready to seek justice for all, regardless of race, color or creed.

Cottrell Lawrence Dellums is a native of Texas. As a high school student his talent in oratory manifested itself and he soon became known as an orator. He won state oratorical contests and his keen mind and unusual linguistic ability made him a formidable opponent on the platform. It should be noted that very early, young Dellums began to sign his name "C. Lawrence Dellums." Soon after he began his public career, he became known simply by the initials of his given names. Few of C. L.'s associates know what his full name is.

This ability to speak forceably and well became C. L.'s hallmark. Wherever he went he was solicited by his associates to be the spokesman for the group seeking to make a presentation of grievances, be it a local official, state governor, or member of Congress. His deportment, his impeccable appearance, his handsome features marked by piercing hazel blue eyes added to his personal magnetism. He demanded to be heard and when he took the floor he was heard and had an uncanny ability to go straight to the heart of the issue. When there was a need to right a wrong, C. L. would represent the persecuted whatever his station in life.

It would take several volumes to fully discuss his career but one phase of his work must be mentioned, that was his work in fighting for a Fair Employment Practices

Oratorical
ability in
H. S.
C. L. Dellums's
interview

Commission. After a successful campaign which he headed, he was rewarded by being appointed by Governor Edmond "Pat" Brown to the first Commission in 1959. He has continued as a Commissioner and was the only one reappointed by Governor Reagan when he became governor. He is presently in his fourteenth year of continued service on the Fair Employment Practices Commission.

The historic fight in Oakland against discrimination in hiring Negro teachers; the fight to eliminate racial discrimination in the Oakland Fire Department, the Police Department, the Oakland Post Office, and a score of other civil service jobs including the long fight to get street car motormen and conductors all were the work of C. L. Dellums and a small cadre of co-workers who stood together in the NAACP and the labor movement. He was the first Negro to be elected to the Executive and Arbitration Committee of the Central Labor Committee of Alameda County. Mr. Dellums helped found the radio program "Negroes In The News" and still heads the committee presenting it. His work with A. Philip Randolph in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters from organizing committee in 1926 and official from 1927 has already been mentioned. In October, 1968, he became International President upon the retirement of A. Philip Randolph.

The NAACP, after the Brotherhood, was his "Cause Celebre," not only as president of the Oakland Branch, but as West Coast Regional Chairman of nine western states. He stood out as "The Leader" in every campaign for civil rights in the fight for freedom.

The talents of C. L. Dellums made him one of America's most distinguished citizens--Labor Leader--Civil Rights and Human Rights Fighters For Freedom. He was one of the chief architects for enlightened legislation which led California and the nation to a new day for foes of discrimination and segregation based on race, color, and creed.

C. L. was always a realist working from the standpoint of concrete facts rather than fantasy, toward the dream of a better tomorrow for all mankind, black and white, old and young, Jew and Protestant or Catholic, regardless of native origin. One of his greatest contributions has been his great knowledge and wisdom which he willingly shared with those who sought him out for counsel. People come from far and near to learn from this great man.

One of his outstanding characteristics is his ability to relate to people. Few men of his stature would have continued to remain close to his people. He kept his office deep in West Oakland and maintained his home in North Oakland in the heart of the Negro ghetto. When one sought an appointment he was never too busy to say, "I'll wait for you, come right down"--no matter how busy at the time, he would lay aside his work to explore with the caller his problem and make a meaningful suggestion for a solution or referral. Many times he answers his own telephone if his secretary is busy or out of the office--the single word "Brotherhood" is the answer at the other end of the line which is full of meaning as it conveys the "no nonsense" approach of the man answering and at the same time this word carries a note of cordiality.

C. L. has had the capacity to carry a work load far beyond the average business executive and it is this ability which has enabled him to participate in so many activities. He always traveled at his own expense and even when he was a delegate to an NAACP Convention or banquet he refused any expense money or remuneration for fees paid. For years his would be the first registration fee received for a meeting.

It is not known even by his closest associates what C. L. does for recreation. It is believed by most that his work was all encompassing and that in these endeavors he found satisfactions which were rewarding enough to suffice. However, it is known that he was an expert billiard player, who, in his early life excelled those who challenged him for a game.

C. L.'s association with his mentor, A. Philip Randolph, made an indelible mark on his life and work. From the beginning of their relationship in Oakland in 1926 until the present time, the friendship has endured with deepening devotion. It is difficult to envision how the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters could have been founded and carried forward without these two men. A. Philip Randolph was the genius who founded the organization working from his base in New York and C. L. Dellums, his protege, working to make the organization a success in the West from his home base in Oakland, California. C. L. has often remarked that their philosophies were held in common and that together they planned their work. Both worked for the major issues of their time, the struggle to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters against the opposition of the powerful Pullman Company;

the fight against Communism and infiltration of the National Negro Congress in the 1930s; the March on Washington Movement in 1941, and the fight against racial discrimination within the labor movement itself. In 1963, C. L. remained in Chicago locked in negotiations with the Pullman Company and did not himself attend the historic March in Washington, D.C. But, he had worked long and hard to support the effort initiated by Phil Randolph.

Finally, C. L. always had a high regard and love for his family. His mother in her later years made her home with him and his wife until her death. He always spoke with affection for his brother Vernie and his family, one of whom is his nephew, the Honorable Congressman Ronald V. Dellums. But, above all he speaks of his love and concern for his wife, Walter, and their daughter, Marva, and his grandchildren. C. L. once said at the conclusion of a speech "We have an obligation to make this a better place for our children and our grandchildren." Such is the philosophy of this magnificent man, still active in the struggle for Human Rights who has allied himself with every movement for good in the past half century. It is good that his historical sketch has been prepared by The Bancroft Library, because this man rarely spoke of himself and his deep sense of personal humility would have kept this information from ever coming to light for the benefit of posterity.

Never have so many been indebted to a single individual. C. L. Dellums is a legend in his own time. I am proud to call him friend.

Mrs. Tarea Hall Pittman *
West Coast Regional Director, NAACP
1959-1967

28 June 1973
Berkeley, California

* identify Pittman

December 12, 1989

C. L. Dellums

AS A LEADER in two long, and ultimately successful, struggles for civil rights, C. L. Dellums learned that victory did not come easily. He was fired from his \$2-a-day job with the Pullman Co. when he joined A. Philip Randolph as a founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the 1920s, a time when black unions were not recognized by management or organized labor.

Dellums, who succeeded Randolph as president of the union, found it took even greater persistence to win his 14-year campaign to establish a Fair Employment Practices Commission in California. He recalled that Governor Earl Warren refused to see him ("If I could have done so," Dellums said, "I'd have made the worst mistake in life. I'd have kept him off the Supreme Court").

GOVERNOR PAT BROWN appointed Dellums to the commission when it was established in 1959; he was reappointed by Governors Ronald Reagan and Jerry Brown. He was also the first West Coast regional director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Dellums, who died in his home in Oakland last week at the age of 89, was a man of personal warmth, integrity and — perhaps surprising in such a successful fighter — great gentleness.

C.L. Dellums

1984 Earl Warren Honoree

C.L. Dellums, an indefatigable leader in the labor and civil rights movement whom the ACLU-NC honored with the Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award in 1984, died November 8 at the age of 89 after suffering a heart attack in Oakland, his home since 1923.

"He will be remembered as one of the most impressive and dedicated leaders of the civil rights movement, having labored since the 1920's to improve employment opportunities for blacks, women and other workers," said ACLU-NC Board Chair H. Lee Halterman.

In 1984, the ACLU-NC bestowed its highest honor, the Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award, on Dellums for the many successful civil rights campaigns he pioneered throughout his career.

Born in Texas, Dellums went to work as a Pullman porter on the railroad. In the 1920's, along with A. Philip Randolph, Dellums organized the first international black-led trade union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. When he began his union organizing, the railroad fired him. He served as Vice President of the union from 1929-1966, and then succeeded Randolph as President.

During World War II, Dellums led a march on Washington that led to the creation of a wartime fair employment commission by President Franklin Roosevelt. Dellums later waged a 14-year fight in the California Legislature for the establishment of the California Fair Employment

Practices Commission in 1959. He was appointed to that Commission in 1959 by Governor Edmund G. Pat Brown and later served as its Chair.

Dellums also lent his formidable leadership to the Western Region of the NAACP, acting as chairperson from its inception in 1948 until 1967.

He is survived by his nephew, 8th District Congressman Ron Dellums, his daughter Marva Dellums and six grandchildren.



C.L. Dellums

Paul Winternitz

December 9, 1989

C. L. Dellums

Labor leader and civil rights campaigner C. L. Dellums died yesterday after suffering a heart attack in Oakland. He was 89.

Mr. Dellums, uncle of Democratic Representative Ronald V. Dellums, devoted much of his life to union activities and to work in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

He was a native of Corsicana, Texas.

During the 1920s, Mr. Dellums helped A. Philip Randolph organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first international union founded and led by black workers.

He was elected vice president of the union in 1929 and president in 1966.

His labor movement activities led to his appointment in 1959 to California's first Fair Employment Practices Commission. He served for 26 years.

Long active in civil rights, Mr. Dellums became the first West Coast Regional Director of the NAACP in 1948.

In 1984, he was honored by the Northern California chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union during its 50th anniversary celebration in San Francisco.

For the past 61 years, Mr. Dellums lived in a modest West Oakland home. He is survived by a daughter, Marva Dellums, of Oakland, and several grandchildren.

Oakland Mayor Lionel Wilson said he was inspired by Mr. Dellums. "He was truly one of the great pioneers in the civil rights movement, not only a local leader but a national leader," Wilson said. "He was also a friend of mine whom I respected greatly and was privileged to work with as a young lawyer in the NAACP." Funeral arrangements are pending.