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The Pittsburgh Courier (1911-1950); Jan 22, 1927; ProQuest

pg. A7

"ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION" IS PLATFORM OF "NEW NEGRO"

A. P. Randolph, Leader Of Brotherhood Of Porters, Champions New Doctrine

Carries Case of Race Workers Before Government Mediation Board—First Official Recognition In History.

By FLOYD J. CALVIN

NEW YORK, Jan. 20.—Is there a New Negro? Some say yes and some say no. I asked A. Philip Randolph for his opinion on the matter. His answer seems to take it for granted there is a new colored man extant. He says: "The distinguishing character of the New Negro is his spirit of revolt

against the old ideology and modus operandi of Negro thought and action. In particular, his increasing development of a world view point, and his militant insistence upon the application of the principle of equality in the valuation of his talent, ability and genius."

As you perhaps know, Mr. Randolph is general organizer and leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first organized economic movement in the history of the race. By the same token Randolph himself is classed as a new Negro, the most outstanding new Negro, because he has 5,000 men behind him, the greatest number of men to ever join an organization for their economic improvement. These men behind Randolph form the majority of the largest single Negro working unit in American industry.

According to a recent public statement of Samuel McCune Lindsay, economic advisor to the Harms Foundation, and professor of social legislation at Columbia University, "The economic foundations of society are those on which all our other social structures rest." James I. Davis, Secretary of Labor, in a recent article, said: "Some of the more turbulent disturbances in our history have been the result of the natural desire of man to dictate the conditions of his employment." A. Philip Randolph himself says: "Practically no economic training has been given the Negro in the past. His training has been chiefly industrial-manual or of the classical and religious type; and the chief forms of organization have been of the fraternal, religious, literary and civil rights nature. Never before has any systematic, definite, comprehensive agitation for economic labor organization as a method of solving the race problem been conducted among Negroes before the advent of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Thus, the movement to organize the Pullman porters and maids has been a national school in economics for the race."

We are beginning to see, then, that the New Negro is seeking economic emancipation. He is seeking this emancipation through organized effort, by demanding that he dictate the conditions of his employment. And we have it on good authority that the matter of economic development should come before all else.

Since about 95 per cent of American Negroes are workers, any vital new movement affecting this mass would represent the New Negro. For that reason I went to A. Philip Randolph and asked him to tell me about the Brotherhood.

"The economic life of the Negro now has the center of the stage," said Mr. Randolph. "This came about in the general trend in world affairs toward economics. Internationally we hear of 'The Economic Consequences of the Peace,' 'Economic Treaties,' etc. Nationally we hear of 'mediation boards,' 'wage scales,' 'arbitration,' etc., all showing that economic subjects are of first importance in the public mind. The present machinery for dealing with the Negro problem is inadequate. Religion, civil rights and politics are but a reflex of our

economic life. When dealing with these questions individually we are merely scratching the surface. Until we get down to the question of work and wages, of hours and working conditions, we will never strike at the roots of our racial ills. I believe the Negro public is gradually coming to recognize this, and when it does the race will be in a far better position to demand respect and action and get it from those in the seats of power."

The man who made this statement is the man who carried the case of the Pullman porters before the United States Mediation Board, through one of its representatives in Chicago on December 8. The Mediation Board was created by an act of Congress to adjust disputes between carriers and their employees without a strike. The appearance of the Brotherhood before the Mediation Board is considered by white labor organizers as a record-breaking feat in labor organization, since the Brotherhood is only a little over a year old, and has already enrolled half of the men in its branch of the service, thereby covering ground it has taken some white unions years to cover.

Getting the Negro workers' case before the United States Government in an official way with his own representatives is something new under the sun. It means that the powerful Pullman Company, one of the richest white corporations in America, may eventually be brought to terms by a mere porter. It means that the Negro porter, long abused and called everything but his right name, may in time sit in conference with those who have robbed him these many years and sign a contract to his own liking, stipulating how long he shall work and for how much money. All this may be forced on the Pullman Company by the United States Government, because the porters stood as one man behind their leader who has ideals and vision.

"The Brotherhood is merely the beginning of organized effort among Negroes," said Mr. Randolph. "Some day I hope to see a kind of economic organization, directing and controlling various crafts and divisions of labor among Negro workers. They will be taught how to strengthen themselves by the co-operation idea, by increasing their efficiency and getting more for their labor. Then the Negro can begin to solve some of the other problems which face him, such as are in the field of civil rights and politics. He will be able to make more headway because he will have the economic strength to back up his demands."

Already the Brotherhood has made a daring, historical move in its fight for economic emancipation, demonstrating that it is directing its energies intelligently. In order to prove that the Pullman Company is systematically robbing the porters, it had the Labor Bureau, Inc., make an investigation of both the Pullman Company's earnings since its inception, and of the porter's standard of living. The Labor Bureau is composed of eight nationally known economists and the effort represents the first time any scientific study has ever been made of the Negro workers' economic conditions by a group of trained minds. The Labor Bureau took the history of the Pullman Company, year by year, since 1869, and showed exactly how much profit it has made, and how much surplus it has piled up at the expense of its employees. It also took the average porter's family and, according to budget statistics prepared by the U. S. Department of Labor, showed the porter cannot, on the wage paid him, live up to the minimum requirements of the American standard of living.

I asked Mr. Randolph how he came to get started in such a tremendous undertaking. "I have always been interested in labor," he said. "I was a waiter once on the Fall River line, and tried to organize the waiters to abolish the 'glory hold,' but was fired as soon as the bosses found out what I was trying to do. I became more deeply interested in the workers when a student at the College of the City of New York. There I was associated with a number of radical and liberal Jews, who smarted under the industrial conditions facing their own people. I began to think about the economic conditions facing my people, and from then dedicated myself to the labor movement."

Mr. Randolph was born in Crescent City, Fla., in 1889. He finished Cookman Institute at Jacksonville, and left Florida in 1911. On his arrival in New York he found a job

as hall boy in an apartment house. Later he was porter and janitor for the Consolidated Gas Company. In 1912, '14, '15 and '16 he attended the College of the City of New York, taking courses in economics, history and philosophy. He was a frequent speaker at church forums, but his views were so pronounced and forceful he met considerable opposition. He founded the Hotel Messenger to fight the cause of the hotel workers, but after a time that died for lack of funds. Then he founded The Messenger Magazine, his present publication, to fight for economic freedom on a larger scale. Meantime he entered politics and was nominated by the Socialist party several times for Assembly, then State Controller, Secretary of State and for Congress. He has been fortunate in bringing to his assistance and to the assistance of the Brotherhood many white liberals and radicals of note, among whom are Professor Bowman of Columbia University, Algernon Lee, director of the Rand School of Social Science; ex-Governor Sweet of Colorado, Morris Hillquit, noted labor attorney; Donald R. Richberg, co-author of the new Railway Labor Act; Morris Ernst, representing Kuhn, Loeb & Co.; H. T. Hunt, former member of the U. S. Railroad Labor Board; Joseph Schlossberg, general secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America; James O'Neal, editor of the New Leader; Mr. Orr, special organizer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; Mr. Lovell, legislative director for the Locomotive Enginemen and Firemen; Mr. Clark, vice president of the Order of Train Conductors; H. E. Wills, vice grand chief Locomotive Engineers; Hugh Frayne, New York organizer of the American Federation of Labor; Mary McDowell, head of the Department of Public Welfare of the City of Chicago; Mayor Brown of Seattle, Wilbur K. Thomas, executive secretary of the Society of Friends, representing a distinguished group of Quakers, and Samuel Untermyer, one of the largest stockholders of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, and nationally known lawyer.