

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BROTHERHOOD

By A. SAGGITARIUS

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is arousing an unusual interest throughout the country. In fact, the world is watching its growth with an intensity of feeling far greater than has ever been evinced in any similar appearing movement. Mixed with genuine interest is a great deal of curiosity and speculation. The question met with most often is: "Why should the organizing of a labor union be causing such a furor, and attracting to its ranks so much real talent from widely different groups and phases of development?"

Many plausible answers may be available to the question. In order to get the most comprehensive ones it would be well to watch some of the vital dramas now being enacted throughout the world. China is trying to throw off the yoke of foreign domination in Church and State, under which it has been held so long. Mexico has become restive and concludes that "Mexico for the Mexicans first", would not be a bad slogan to adopt. Nicaragua is no longer willing to remain docile under a government acting as the catpaw for powerful outside influences. Rumbblings of discontent are to be heard from every continent and many have crystallized into open revolts, that can no longer be silenced by the statement that the big brother knows best. There can be little doubt that he knows best how to take and keep through trickery, might and hypocrisy what does not belong to him. The struggle is one for human rights; a leaning towards independence; a desire to handle the affairs of a group, by that group and for that group. There is a general disrespect for and disbelief in, the social and economic system under which we live. It is a healthy sign of growth, and merely marks a changing era, and is in no way singular in the history of human progress.

Under our present social and economic system the world war is seen as a necessity. A practical and concrete idea of Brotherhood had to be demonstrated by nature, and no more fitting method could be used. It is true that a series of circumstances brought on a forced condition; but with it also came enlightenment. The germinal idea was duly implanted and the change being experienced now, is the aftermath of the spiritual awakening which is ushering in another cycle and higher ideals.

In the Negro world much is said and written of the "New Negro". While some physical changes may be noted in this group, the most pronounced is in his psychology and newly evolved spirit. Like the rest of the peoples of the world, he is being tested for promotion in the New Cycle and his adaptability to the changing conditions will decide his place in the advancing tide of world progress. It may be of interest to note a few of the general characteristics of the Old Negro and compare them with those of the New Negro. The psychology of the Old Negro was built on a foundation of slavery, and the arrogance and deception of masters bent on exploiting and keeping him in subjec-

tion. Thus he believed that his progress depended on the favors of the whites and not in unity with his brothers; that he was inherently inferior to white men in spite of his statements to the contrary; that what he was told by the ruling classes was always true and should be implicitly believed and never questioned; that this is a white world and to be allowed to exist in it at all, is due entirely to the clemency of the whites, and never because he has earned the right to live.

What Answer?

What will the pink man say
When this world is no more
And a man no longer a man
But a spirit impure
Waiting at the court of his God
To answer for the wrongs
He did on the sod?
What will the pink man say?

What will his proud spirit say
When his God should ask him:
"How have you treated your brother,
Your dark brother Jim?"
Will he hang his haughty spirit head
Remembering the tree
And those that he bled?
What will this proud spirit say?

—E. Lucien Waithe

Desire

Desire to us
Was like a double death.
Swift dying
Of our mingled breath,
Evaporation
Of an unknown strange perfume
Between us quickly
In a naked room.

—Langston Hughes

The New Negro, who is a product of the wrongs of the Old Negro, does not subscribe to any of the above. He believes that all true progress comes from within and not by leaning on others; hence he is determined to help himself through co-operation with his group and all men with liberal views; that he is only inferior when measured by his acts that mark him as such. He questions the sincerity of statements made by those who exploit him, and discards all that cannot bear the light of reason. He believes he has a definite place, wherever he is found, and is ready to fight for its maintenance and improvement.

It is not to be supposed, by the above, that this new element is intolerant or nursing a grievance which is displayed on the least provocation. Quite to the contrary; it is mild, tolerant and seeks through union to bring about those corrective methods that

will ensure the rights that are now denied him. Determined to establish in fact the ideal, that merit and not color or creed is the standard by which men should be judged. When it is understood that a forward group in all nations, in the rich as well as the poor, the whites as among the blacks, yellow and red, in the professions as well as the crafts are earnestly engaged in efforts to bring about this condition, a clearer picture of the struggle towards the realization of a better world will be understood. The movement known as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids is thus seen as a part of the Negroes' contribution to the finer world movement among progressive men. Its attractive force lies in the great spiritual oneness which is a dominant trait. The ideals of truth, faith, justice and hard work that mark its campaign are the signs by which recognition becomes possible and the talisman for entrance to the seeming inaccessible. Its banner bears the emblem "Looking Forward." That is, broadly speaking, the philosophy of the Brotherhood, and it is engaging the attention of men of many callings, because it is a part of their programme. The successful issue will mean added power to a worthy cause. Its failure would mean the weakening of an army fighting along an extremely wide battle front.

As China is doggedly struggling to work out a worthy destiny led by the most advanced of its own race; as Mexico and Nicaragua are working to improve their conditions, through close studies and management of their own affairs; so Negroes through leaders chosen from and by themselves are striving to raise their status among men, by giving to their community and humanity in general the best there is in them. Self expression seems to be the keynote of individuals and groups throughout the world. The simultaneous activities of persons far removed, yet striving for the practical accomplishment of a like ideal points to the propitious time for righting of wrongs generated by unfair governments and selfish business methods.

That great opposition is offered by those whose unjust rule is threatened, is to be expected. That powerful allies are rallying to the support of the cause is merely another evidence of its righteousness, its truth, and its tolerant, if fearless campaign.

It is also true that many who with their descendants would be most benefitted by joining in the good work are antagonistic. Their consciousness has simply not been aroused hence they are not qualifying to be workers in the New Cycle. It has been justly said that the hog will return to his wallow. When a later generation reviews the causes that operated in bringing about the realization of a closely knit humanity—a well defined Brotherhood of man—the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids will be well in evidence. We subscribe to the belief of Charles Sumner who said, "No honest, earnest effort in a good cause can fail."