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# THE NEGRO LABOR UNIONIST OF NEW YORK

Problems and Conditions among Negroes in the Labor  
• Unions in Manhattan with Special Reference to  
the N.R.A. and Post-N.R.A. Situations

BY

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**SINCERELY DEDICATED**  
**TO**  
**GERTRUDE BISHOP PHILLIPS AUSTIN**  
**An Inspiring Friend**

## PREFACE

THE Harlem "Riot" of March 19, 1935, the causes of which were determined to have been basically economic, created a new interest among laymen as well as students of social and economic problems in the conditions of life and work of the people of that area. So great, in fact, was this interest, that the City of New York, in an effort to determine the cause of the riot, gave legal recognition to the need of a fundamental social and economic survey of that area and the Mayor appointed a Commission to undertake the study. One of the phases of this research project dealt with the problems involved in the employment of Negroes and the necessarily related consideration of their status in the local organized labor movement—a tremendously important issue, for trade unions, broadening their jurisdictional activities to cover many professional and "white-collar" occupations as well as the skilled craftsmen and unskilled common laborers, have increased their scope to such an extent that union membership is now a prerequisite for almost any kind of employment. It was during his service as a research worker on this problem that the author of this treatise developed a keen interest in the use by Negroes of collective bargaining through trade unions in their efforts to secure and maintain desirable employment. Therefore, apart from his official work with the Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, he began this intensive study, the purpose of which is to present objectively and descriptively a picture of local conditions among Negroes in the labor unions of Manhattan, with a brief sketch of the historical development and special emphasis on a descriptive analysis of the situation at the close of the N. R. A. period.

A preliminary survey of the published and written materials and all other available sources on the subject revealed the complete lack of up-to-date information and the utter inadequacy, because of recent developments brought about during the N. R. A. period, of the data available on the local situation. However, several comprehensive studies dealing wholly or in part with the status of the Negro worker in the American labor movement were available. Outstanding among these are: *The Black Worker* by Sterling Spero and Abram Harris, *Racial Factors in American Industry* by Herman Feldman, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions* by Ira Reid and an earlier one, *Negro Labor in the United States* by Charles Wesley. All of these point out that in his struggle to gain a prominent, stable and desirable position in the economic life of the American people the Negro worker has been handicapped by his lack of membership in some unions and various limitations on his full membership in others. Throughout these treatises there are numerous references to local New York conditions. Collection of these references, together with many other isolated reports, newspaper and magazine articles, etc. dealing with or related to this subject, served very well in the historical development of the background of the present conditions. On the other hand, information on the N. R. A. and post-N. R. A. situations is the result of original, first-hand research and investigation carried out during the last six months of 1935.

The major part of this field work consisted of interviewing union officials, members and other people connected with the organized labor movement in Manhattan, attending labor conferences, union meetings and lectures and making general observations. Since no one agency, such as the Central Trades and Labor Council of New York, had complete information on the actual relationship of Negroes to local unions—no records of the racial identity of the members

of these locals being kept in many cases—and since definite information on the particular experiences of each local union with Negro members was desired, the author resorted to the alternative method of getting authentic information—the personal interview with representative officials and the scrupulous examination of the records of each individual local union. These investigations were supplemented by interviews with both white and Negro union members selected at random. Contact was established with every union in Manhattan, although a small proportion of them evaded cooperation. On the whole, it cannot be said that the unions that did not furnish information were unfavorable in their attitude toward Negroes. On the contrary, many of them—for example, a few locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the champion among unions fighting for the advancement of Negroes in the organized labor movement—are exceptionally friendly toward Negro members, while in both the groups that supplied information and those that withheld it there are some that exclude Negro members by means of a constitutional provision. Practically all of those refusing information merely insisted that they do not usually open their records to the public. The results of this research and investigation have been interpreted in such a manner as to show whether or not the situation in New York City is similar to that in the United States as a whole, and it is hoped that they may serve as a factual basis in future planning for a more complete integration of Negro workers in the local organized labor movement.

The author wishes here to take the opportunity to acknowledge his indebtedness to the several individuals and organizations without whose invaluable assistance this study could not have been made. To Dr. E. Franklin Frazier, Professor of Sociology at Howard University and Director of Research for The Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem,

gratitude is expressed for making it possible for the author to do much of the field work for this study while serving as a research worker for the Commission. Especial indebtedness is acknowledged to Dr. S. McC. Lindsay and Dr. R. E. Chaddock, who gave valuable advice and criticisms on the planning of the study and made pertinent suggestions throughout its development. Similar credit is also due Dr. A. A. Tenney and Dr. L. Wolman.

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Gracious thanks are extended to Professor Ira DeA. Reid of Atlanta University for reading the entire manuscript and making valuable suggestions and to Caulbert A. Jones for assisting in the preparation of the source materials and the final manuscript.

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C: L. F.

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**PART I**  
**NEGRO LABOR UNIONISM IN MANHATTAN**  
**PRIOR TO THE N.E.A. PERIOD**

## CHAPTER I

### INDUSTRIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT AMONG NEGROES IN NEW YORK CITY

To a real understanding of the position of Negro workers in the organized labor movement of today some knowledge of their early economic status and industrial activity is essential. Obviously, being a worker in a given craft, trade or industry is the first requisite of membership in a union of workers. Questions such as the following therefore arise: To what extent have Negroes been engaged in occupations that formed the reserve from which union members were drawn? If at first they did work at poorly organized trades and occupations, have they gradually changed, over a period of years, to those more highly organized? In brief, what have been the industrial distribution and occupational trends of Negroes in Manhattan from the time when they became "free men" and entered into competition for employment? The purpose of this chapter is primarily to present in an objective manner the background of the Negroes' present industrial position from the point of view of the changing numbers of that race engaged in the various occupations. Very little effort, if any, has been made—except incidentally—to analyze or interpret the social or economic factors underlying such shifts or lack of shifts. Moreover, this entire section can not be much more than a sketch for, in the first place, full occupational returns for Negroes in New York City were not available until the 1890 Federal Census, and, in the second place, these returns were not broken down by

boroughs, and there were no separate returns for Manhattan borough until 1910. Such being the case, factual information for the period prior to the 1890 Federal Census can be gleaned only from public documents, reports, proceedings of various organizations, newspaper articles and a host of other unrelated short items that have been collected. The period from 1890 to date, and especially that from 1910 to date, can be covered in much more detail because of the full census reports for Manhattan. The following paragraphs represent a somewhat concise summary of these materials.

On the historical view of occupations of Negroes in New York City George E. Haynes presents some very interesting comments.<sup>1</sup> He points out that the value of slave labor—mainly on farms—was realized in the New Amsterdam Colony as early as 1628. At that time the business of slave trading was becoming quite lucrative, so much so that the Dutch West India Company in 1628 made definite agreements to supply the colonists with slaves. This company not only supplied other groups or agencies but it also used slaves on its farms as well as on the company's vessels as deckhands and stevedores.<sup>2</sup> As time passed, the types of work in which Negro slaves were occupied multiplied. It is reported that they were used in the construction and maintenance of public roads and highways and in the repairing of Fort Amsterdam.<sup>3</sup> By 1680 their services were found to be valuable in the building trades—particularly in house-building<sup>4</sup> and hod-carrying and by the close of the seventeenth century they made up practically the whole group of

<sup>1</sup> Haynes, George E., *The Negro at Work in New York City* (New York, 1912), pp. 66-69.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, G. W., *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619-1880* (New York, 1883), vol. i, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Laws of New York, 1691-1773*, pp. 83, 156; Doc. relating to Colonial History of New York, vol. i, 499; ii, 474.

<sup>4</sup> Doc. relating to Colonial History of New York, iii, 307.

servant workers in the province of New York. In addition to the slaves a great number of Free Negroes were either hired or indentured for the same kind of work.<sup>5</sup>

It seems that the Negroes' spreading out into occupations other than agricultural pursuits, whether voluntary or involuntary, was one of the factors that caused a great deal of unrest among the members of this race in the early years of the eighteenth century. This unrest, combined with the fact that the African slaves of this period were far less docile than those furnished by the Dutch West India Company in the early seventeenth century, caused them to give expression to their dissatisfaction in a meeting in 1712 in an orchard in Maiden Lane.<sup>6</sup> Although this meeting ended in open conflict between these Negroes and a group of whites and in the subsequent punishment of many of the Negroes involved, the increasing desire of the Negroes for economic, political and social freedom was not successfully stemmed. In 1741, another incident, "the so-called Negro plot of 1741", gave further expression to the restlessness of both slaves and free workers, among whom were some Negro seamen.<sup>7</sup> As in the case of the 1712 uprising many Negroes were punished severely, some—one of whom was a Negro doctor—being executed.<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that these two revolts were checked almost at their beginning, it was realized that the growing rebellious attitude on the part of the slaves would ultimately result in a bloody upheaval unless steps were taken to remove some of the more fundamental causes of the unrest. On this point Janvier stated "that the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, ix, 875; iv, 511; Burghermen and Freemen, *Collection of New York Historical Society* (1885), p. 569.

<sup>6</sup> Forster, A. G., *Statistics of Negro Population in Manhattan*, Columbia University Master's Essay, 1920, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Horsmanden, D., *The New York Conspiracy or History of the Negro Plot* (New York, 1742), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



alarm bred by the so-called Negro plot of 1741 was most effective in checking the growth of slavery in this city." <sup>9</sup> The following century witnessed definite movements toward the emancipation of Negro slaves in New York. At the 1776 state constitutional convention, Governor Morris stood firm in demanding that slavery be abolished "so that in the future ages every human being who breathes the air of this state shall enjoy the privilege of a free man." <sup>10</sup> Fifty years later, the Negro in New York became a "free man", when the state legislature in 1785 prohibited the sale of slaves in New York; in 1799 an act was passed which gave freedom to the children of slaves; in 1817 there followed another act—to become effective in 1827—providing for the complete abolition of slavery throughout the entire state. "Thus," Forster states, "the day on which the act went into force, July 4, 1827, is regarded as the emancipation day of the Negro in New York State." <sup>11</sup>

Although this legal act gave Negroes physical freedom, there still remained many problems and difficulties to be faced—especially by the workers. Employment opportunities were limited because of the exceedingly hostile attitude of those who became their fellow workers. The influx of immigrants from European countries made the situation even worse, for the labor market was thus flooded with cheap labor, labor that exhibited neither fear nor pride about entering into competition with Negroes for even the most menial types of employment in domestic and personal service, the type in which a great many Negroes engaged immediately following the legal recognition of their freedom in 1827. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Mary White Ovington, *Half a Man* (New York, 1911), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Haynes, G. E., *op. cit.*, p. 67.

Writing on the general relationship of white and black labor during the years prior to the Civil War, Charles H. Wesley made some general remarks that were quite applicable to the situation in New York City.<sup>18</sup> He pointed out that white labor, in the north as well as in the south, had assumed three definite and well defined attitudes toward Negro workers: (1) open opposition to them, (2) secret opposition "founded upon color prejudice" to their progress and (3) opposition to the further extension of labor opportunities to free Negroes. Continuing, he observed that:

The anti-slavery movement would destroy slavery but it neglected the more practical task of creating an economic future for the free Negro population in industry. Many Negroes were physically free, and yet they were enslaved and placed in degraded economic positions by the apathy of their friends and the hostile attitude of their fellow workers. Racial toleration in industrial occupations was rare. In the majority of places where Negroes and whites worked together there was a sullen suspicion which soon gave opportunity to the whites to force Negroes out of their employments either by means of economic pressure or by legislation. The conditions of Negro free labor which were brought about by the Civil War did not end economic strife between the races. They served only to intensify the competition, and to increase the struggle between white labor and black labor in the United States. Labor had not yet learned the value of coöperation.

With but little modification—such as changing the reference to the Civil War to the Act of 1827 which freed Negroes in New York state and the reference to the United States to New York City—this passage, as indicated above, gives an almost perfect characterization of the relationship of Negro and white labor in New York City just prior to the

<sup>18</sup> Wesley, Charles H., *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925*, New York, 1927, p. 83.

Civil War. This view is well substantiated by various other works quoted below.

In further reference to the immigrants of the early nineteenth century it should be pointed out that as long as there were only small immigrant groups in contact with Negro workers the relationship remained quite amicable.<sup>14</sup> When, however, large groups of immigrants met large groups of Negroes under conditions of keen competition some racial antagonism developed. As a great many immigrants did not go into the Southern cities, apparently shunning places where large numbers of Negroes were present, they were more or less compelled to go into occupations that offered the easiest entry into the field of employment—for instance the occupations of porters, barbers, waiters, servants, cooks, maids, etc.<sup>15</sup> But, "It is an erroneous point of view which would state that the entrance of foreigners into domestic service at this period was a new phenomena," writes Wesley, "and that they suddenly deprived the Negroes of their previous monopoly. The foreigners had furnished the larger number of domestics throughout the nineteenth century."<sup>16</sup> A report of the New York Society for the Encouragement of Faithful Domestics indicated that during the period of 1826 to 1830 the applications for employment were distributed about as follows: 3,601 Americans, 8,346 Irish, 2,574 Negroes, 642 English and 377 foreigners from other countries.<sup>17</sup> "Do-

<sup>14</sup> *The African Repository*, vol. xxix, pp. 323-324.

<sup>15</sup> *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, vol. iii, p. 60, quoting from John Finch, "Notes of Travel in the United States". Olmstead, *Seaboard Slave States*, p. 14. "Celebration of the Ninetieth Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery," p. 23. Clark, *History of Manufactures*, p. 553. *New York Tribune*, January 16, 1855.

<sup>16</sup> Wesley, Charles H., *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> *New York Mercury*, May 12, 1830. *American Daily Advertiser*, May 23, 1829.

mestic service as a field of labor has always attracted immigrants who came to America. Quite naturally, the Negroes felt their competition more in the periods of the largest immigration, when, in order to obtain employment the foreigners sought all kinds of work." It is therefore evident that the Negro worker was destined for a tough struggle to prevent his almost complete exclusion from employment.

In addition to the willingness of immigrants to accept menial employment their unwillingness to work with Negroes also operated to force the latter out of certain occupations in the North and in the South.<sup>18</sup> It seems apparent that this action on their part was due almost solely to racial prejudice.<sup>19</sup> A speech of Frederick Douglass showed that such prejudice against free colored people in the United States, regardless of their competence, was most evident and most widely practiced in the mechanical trades.<sup>20</sup> Not only in the field of employment and in training for employment, in the mechanical pursuits which from an early date were among the most highly organized trades, but also in many other aspects of life which brought the two groups together—in the schools, amusement houses and conveyances of New York City and other large cities—did this prejudice assert itself.<sup>21</sup> Although Wesley was making another point in the following excerpt, his illustration serves well to demonstrate how the coming of immigrant workers to New York City and how old and new racial prejudices tended definitely to limit

<sup>18</sup> *African Repository*, vol. xxvii, p. 110; vol. xxxi, p. 140 quoting the *Philadelphia North American*. Olmstead, *op. cit.*, p. 85. *The Cotton Kingdom*, vol. ii, p. 365. *New York Tribune*, November 27, 1857. *The Richmond Whig*, December 11, 1845.

<sup>19</sup> Clark, *The Present Condition of the Free Colored People*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> Speech of Frederick Douglass, quoted by *New York Tribune*, September 30, 1853. *Niles Register*, vol. xvi, p. 441. *Harrisburg Keystone*, June 10, 1851.

<sup>21</sup> *African Repository*, vol. xxix, p. 163. *New York Tribune*, September 16, 1850. Joseph Sturge, *A Visit to the United States*, p. 69.

the advance of Negroes in the skilled occupations that later formed the backbone of the organized labor movement in New York City as well as in the United States.

. . . the city of New Orleans presents a larger proportion of trained occupations than does New York, and it has been taken at times for the basis of the assertion that mulattoes are superior to blacks. New Orleans contained a large mulatto population while New York did not have such a large proportion. This accounts in part for the larger percentage in trained occupations. It is a fact, also, that the mulatto proportion in the free Negro population was greater than the proportion in the slave population in 1850. The proportion was 581 mulattoes to 1,000 blacks in the free Negro population and 83 mulattoes to 1,000 blacks in the slave population. In New Orleans, racial barriers were not such obstacles as they were in New York. In matters of labor and service, the "color line" could be crossed often without the employer, the buyer, or the one seeking a service realizing the race of the worker with whom he was dealing. On the contrary, New York practiced wide discriminations against Negroes and these served to restrict the Negro occupations. Foreign workers also gave the colored worker a greater competition here so that the occupations which were carried on by Negroes in the South were often in the hands of other races in the North. A study has been made of the New York City Directory as a check upon the census figures. The Directory reveals the fact that there are a few discrepancies between it and the census figures as noted above. The census table gives no cabinetmakers; the Directory gives one cabinetmaker. The census gives three merchants and the Directory gives six; the census gives two confectioners and the Directory gives three. These differences serve to illustrate how imperfect the one or the other, or both of these collections may have been. In the city of New Orleans, the number of the mulatto population in the free colored population was not only higher but also more intelligent than in other cities. It is true that in this instance, pursuits requiring education have a larger proportion of mulattoes than of blacks.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.

This leaves little doubt that race prejudice, based mainly on color, was one of the specific obstacles to the progress of the Negro worker in the more desirable types of occupation.

Growing out of this attitude and the accompanying normal competition for work between the whites and Negroes were many disturbances, riots in some cases. Various isolated reports give accounts of a few of them. When stevedores and longshoremen went out on strike during this pre-civil War period in an effort to gain better working conditions through increased wages, Negro workers were substituted. Soon an encounter between these Negroes and the striking stevedores, at that time mainly Irishmen, ensued on Morgan's London Line docks, but the presence of an armed Negro worker among them put the Irishmen to flight.<sup>22</sup> In a short while, however, these same Negroes were displaced by the returning former workers.<sup>23</sup> Several years later, in 1862, Negro and white longshoremen again came to battle when Negroes replaced white longshoremen who had been fired. Again, it was necessary to call on the police to quell the fights.<sup>24</sup> It is reported that in early August, 1862 a group of whites molested Negro women and even children who had obtained work in a tobacco factory.<sup>25</sup> The following month, September, 1862, also witnessed many conflicts. During the next year, 1863, one of the most terrible battles of all occurred as a result of the conscription Act of March 3, 1863, with New York the scene of the first of the Draft Riots on July 13. The Act became definitely related to the labor problem because conscription drew heavily from the ranks of the mechanics and laborers; the racial issue therefore came to the fore with a resulting change in the direction of the

<sup>22</sup> *New York Tribune*, January 18, 1855.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1855.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1, 1862; McNeill, *The Labor Movement*, p. 126.

<sup>25</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 6, 1862.

riot from a protest against conscription to a fight against Negroes, against property, fine houses, good apparel, against all the conserving influences and elements of society.<sup>27</sup> Analyzing the Draft Riots, Wesley writes:

One is not compelled to look very far in order to see how the Draft Riots might have affected the Negro population. At the outbreak of the riots it had been asserted by one newspaper that "this is a nigger war," and it has been asked frankly, "Why Lincoln did not put Negroes front." The Negroes were hunted down and mistreated not only because they were involved in the cause of the war, but because of the labor competition with the whites, and especially with the Irish in the menial forms of labor. The residences, barber-shops, business houses, boarding houses and the colored Orphan Asylum on Fifth Avenue, between Forty-third and Forty-fourth Streets (a three-story brick building, which was valued at \$35,000), were burned and destroyed. The Negroes of Weekville, a suburb of New York, believing that an attack was to be made upon them, armed themselves, organized in groups to resist the mob, and made application to the sheriff for more arms so that they might protect themselves. The riots so affected the living conditions among the colored population of New York that a Relief Committee was established with an office on Fourth Street. By August 10, 1863, the sum of \$38,696 had been collected as a Relief Fund. This office was kept open as an employment office after the sufferers had been relieved.

Not only was such an office necessary, but some effort was needed in order to encourage the opening of avenues of employment to colored workers in the north. In 1862, at a meeting of the National Freedmen's Association in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Henry Ward Beecher declared that the opportunities for Negro labor in the city of New York were very few. There were no foundries, machine-shops, shipyards, cabinet-shops or other remunerative employment which the Negro could enter. He said, "The only chance for the colored man North, now-

<sup>27</sup> *New York Commercial Advertiser*, July 15, 1863.

adays, is to wait and shave, and they are being driven from that as fast as possible." This association declared that its purpose was to aid in creating new opportunities for him. Individual successes were being made in northern centers, but the group was proscribed by limitations which were in the main racial, and it was this condition which liberal thinkers sought to remedy.<sup>28</sup>

Charles S. Johnson states :

Free and fugitive Negroes in New York and Pennsylvania were in constant conflict with this group [the Irish] and the bitter hostility showed itself most violently in the draft riots of New York. These Hibernians controlled the hod carrying and common labor jobs, opposing every approach of the Negro as a menace to their slight hold upon America and upon a means of livelihood. The Germans absorbed many of the domestic and catering positions at the same time that they were creating new standards of skill in trades.<sup>29</sup>

These were by no means all the riots that occurred, but they serve to indicate just what sort of thing was happening and how they were related to the labor problem. Therefore, the statement made above, that Negro workers were destined to have a hard struggle to maintain their position in the occupations in which they predominated in the early nineteenth century and to increase their numbers in the more highly skilled trades which were soon to be strongly organized, may safely be reiterated.

Facing these apparently insurmountable handicaps, Negro labor continued to push onward. By 1870 some progress has been made. An analysis of the 3,500 Negro voters in New York City in that year showed that among them were 104 shoemakers, 100 engineers, about 80 carpenters, and some other skilled mechanics. It should be noted, however,

<sup>28</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>29</sup> Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, New York, 1930, p. 12.



that these figures do not give a complete picture of the situation, for many skilled Negro workers, prevented from working at their trades, were classified as unskilled. A case in point was noted by the *New Era*, which pointed out that a skilled Negro engraver had to work as a waiter because no employer would accept him on the ground that the white engravers would not work with him.<sup>20</sup> An earlier issue of the same publication reported that 500 longshoremen, 400 waiters, 50 engineers, 32 tobacco twistors, 24 printers, 15 smelters and refiners, 14 masons and bricklayers, 6 moulders and 2 rollers were among the Negro population of this city.<sup>21</sup> Although these few advances do indicate some progress, the obstacle created by the keen competition of foreign workers was still present, not only in domestic and personal service, but also in other unskilled work such as longshoring and common labor. The continued presence of "this racial situation gave rise to cooperative efforts on the part of the Negroes themselves in order to prevent complete exclusion in the trades." In a later chapter these efforts will be discussed more at length.

Reviewing the industrial condition of Negroes in the labor field for the last half of the nineteenth century, John Gilmer Speed seemed to arrive at the conclusion that Negro workers were not only making no progress in the skilled trades but were even losing the foothold they once had in personal service work. He remarked:

In 1850 when New York had a population of 515,547, there were 13,815 Negroes in the city. This was not a formidable proportion, only about two and one half per cent., but the Negroes then in the city were in many regards much better off than their successors are fifty years later. At that time the chief caterers of the city were Negroes, as they continued to be

<sup>20</sup> *The New Era*, September 8, 1870.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, February 17, 1870.

in Philadelphia till a very few years ago. There were many barber shops manned by colored men. The white-washing trade belonged almost exclusively to Negroes. Negroes also were the private coachmen of the town, and not a few drove public hacks. The bootblack business was theirs, and very many, if not most, of the hotel dining-rooms and restaurants had Negro waiters. This was a half a century ago, when the opportunity for Negro employment in New York was at high-water mark. From that mark it has been receding ever since. At first slowly, but in the past dozen years very rapidly.

There are no colored artisans in New York. The trade unions would prevent any such from receiving employment. As common laborers they are received on almost equal terms with others, but this is not an attractive occupation for the ambitious Negroes who come to New York to make fortunes.<sup>22</sup>

Speed here introduced another factor in the limitation of the Negro worker's entry into the skilled trades—the question involved in the early attitude of the trade unions toward Negro artisans. He definitely observed that the hostile attitude of the trade unions was a formidable deterrent to encouraging the development of Negro artisans. About six years later in 1906 a principal of Public School No. 80, Borough of Manhattan, New York became somewhat interested in the same problem.<sup>23</sup> In an effort to get at the fundamental issues involved he asked and answered two questions: (1) "Is the Afro-American possessed of the necessary qualifications to hold his own in the strenuous industrial and economic conflicts of a city like New York?" and (2) "Are his opportunities for employment conducive to the development of the best of which he is capable?" His answers are as follows:

<sup>22</sup> John Gilmer Speed, "The Negro in New York," *Harper's Weekly*, vol. xlv, December 22, 1900, pp. 1249-1250.

<sup>23</sup> William L. Binkley, "The Industrial Conditions of the Negro in New York City," *American Academy of Political and Social Science, The Annals*, vol. xxvii, May, 1906, pp. 590-591.

(1) With regard to the first question, it would be needless to take time to touch upon it, if one would only remember that for two centuries almost all the labor of the South, both skilled and unskilled was by the man of African lineage. He was not only the butcher that slaughtered the cattle, but also the tanner that prepared the hide, and the shoemaker that put it into shape. He was the laborer who felled the tree as well as he who sawed it into boards, and he who built the house. He was the brickyard hand who dug the clay and burned the brick; he was also the workman who put the finished product into buildings. Though his field is being now encroached upon by the native white man and the foreigner, he is still the ubiquitous artisan of the South. He comes to New York and other cities with this same skill of hand, ready and anxious to continue his trade. Where he has found employment he has given satisfaction.

(2) Such being the case, does he readily find employment? Or, rather, does he find employment as readily as other immigrants to the city? Does he, a native of the United States, have an equal chance with the unnaturalized European immigrant, or does he suffer a disadvantage? Unfortunately and regretfully the last is the case. While there are many unions that are, in their constitution, open to all men, there are others that bar the door tight against any man with an admixture of African blood. There is further, a conviction that even the supposedly open unions do not always give the black brother a cordial welcome. As a result of these conditions there were reported in the last census only 4,419 men and 1,401 women engaged in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits out of a total population of 99,232 in the state. It is safe to assume that many of these so rated were only irregularly employed, working at their trades as odd jobs. An investigation of the rosters of trades unions would in all probability show only a minority of them as members.

The problem that was so prominent during the time of the pre-Civil War free Negro workers again comes forward, viz., limitation of employment opportunities for Negroes on

account of color or race prejudice, as a possible explanation for the failure of Negro workers to expand in the trades. An investigation of trade unions such as was here mentioned by Bulkley was made at about the same time. This, too, will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Probably the best account of the occupational distribution of Negro workers up to 1905 is given by George E. Haynes.<sup>24</sup> He based his figures on the 1905 New York State Census figures and, after a reclassification of the occupations, arrived at some very interesting facts. Of the 7,847 Negro wage earners of Manhattan, fifteen years of age and over, 3,802 were males and 4,045 females. The group of occupations having the highest percentage of such workers was "domestic and personal service" for both males and females, the percentages being 40.2 for males and 89.3 for females. He points out further as being quite important the high percentage, 20.6, of males engaged in occupations under the general grouping "Trade" and the percentage, 9.4, under "Transportation". These seem to indicate that "while some of these occupations may differ little in character from domestic and personal service, yet the occupations that are entirely removed from that classification are sufficient in number to show, as did the figures for 1890 and 1900, the possibility of Negroes in considerable numbers securing a scope of employment which includes other occupations than those of domestic and personal service".

In summary he states that the majority of Negroes were in the domestic and personal service group partly because of three factors: (1) historical condition of servitude, (2) prejudice on the part of white workmen and employers, and (3) inefficiency of Negro wage-earners for competition in occupations requiring a higher order of training and skill. "The steady increase in 1890, 1900 and 1905 of numbers

<sup>24</sup> Haynes, G. E., *op. cit.*, pp. 72-77.

employed in occupations other than personal and domestic service is prophetic of a probable widening scope of the field of employment open to them."

For the period beginning in 1910 and ending in 1930 complete occupational returns for Manhattan are given by the Federal census reports for 1910, 1920 and 1930. From these data a detailed analysis of the industrial distribution and occupational trends of Negroes in Manhattan can be worked out. Such an analysis is attempted in the following paragraphs, but before it is considered, some statement of the classification of the occupations should be made. According to one of the census volumes, the occupation classifications used in the 1930 census differ in a small degree from those used in the 1920 census; it was therefore necessary for purposes of comparison to assign a few of the occupational group, as determined by the 1920 census, to general divisions of occupations that differed from those under which they were classified in the 1920 census.<sup>86</sup> As such changes in the original classifications of individual cases are noticeable in the 1930 returns, it is obvious that small increases or decreases of the numbers of workers shown in any given occupation may be the result of a difference in classification. Just as this is the case with the 1930-1920 figures, so is it true for the 1920-1910 figures, but, on the whole, the differences are somewhat compensating. Thus, comparisons can be made with a reasonable degree of validity.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Negroes in the United States, 1920-1932*, U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1935, p. 287

<sup>86</sup> It should be further pointed out that, although the occupations are grouped, as given in the Thirteenth Census, 1910, vol. iv: "Population—Occupational Statistics," pp. 575-577, no sub-totals are given for the groups as in the 1920 and 1930 reports. In order that these groups for 1910, 1920 and 1930 could be compared, the totals for the individual groups of the 1910 returns were determined; however, the grand totals differed somewhat from those given in the return for all occupations. Since this

First, let us view the problem as a whole—the total population, those gainfully occupied, the percentage of the total population occupied, etc. Although the figures for Negroes are usually compared with the figures for the total population, in many cases comparisons are made between the figures for the Negro population and the figures for all other classes. By this method influences that the Negro population might have on the total population are eliminated. This classification is not arbitrary; it is based on the peculiar characteristic of the Negro worker—his color—so that there results in fact a comparison between the Negroes, or the black workers, and all other classes, generally classified as white workers. To simplify the discussion through visual aid a number of tables have been prepared. It is hoped that they will be almost completely self-explanatory.

The first consideration is of the population itself. What are the size and proportion of the total and the Negro population? Table I gives the answer.

TABLE I

NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF NEGROES AND ALL OTHER CLASSES IN THE TOTAL POPULATION, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

Year	Total	Negro		All Other Classes	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1910.....	2,331,542	60,534	2.6	2,271,008	97.4
1920.....	2,284,103	109,133	4.3	2,174,970	95.7
1930.....	1,876,312	224,670	12.0	1,651,642	88.0

It is interesting to note that although the total population decreased from 1910 to 1930, the Negro population increased

difference was very slight and since no absolute figures are compared, the grand totals as determined by the summation of the group totals will be used for this analysis. Figures for 1920 were taken from Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, vol. iv: "Population—Occupations," Chapter vii, pp. 1157-1162 and pp. 1179 to 1173; for 1930, from the Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930—Population—vol. iv—"Occupations by States," pp. 1141-1143.

tremendously, thereby changing the proportion from 2.6 per cent in 1910 to 12 per cent in 1930. But how does this proportion compare with that of the age groups representing those available for gainful employment? The Federal Census returns give figures for gainfully occupied workers 10 years of age and over. It is probable that these figures represent practically all workers, for compulsory school attendance laws in New York are fairly effective in prohibiting employment of at least those under 10 years of age. Inspection of Table II indicates that the proportion of Negroes 10 years of age and over in the population is just about the same as the proportion of Negroes in the total population.

TABLE II

NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF NEGROES AND ALL OTHER CLASSES IN THE POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

Year	Total	Negro		All Other Classes	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1910.....	1,900,911	53,571	2.8	1,847,340	97.2
1920.....	1,875,286	95,959	5.1	1,779,327	94.9
1930.....	1,626,216	192,995	11.9	1,433,221	88.1

Now that the size and proportionate composition of the total population have been presented, it is in order to consider at this point the extent to which these persons are gainfully occupied.

Table III shows that it was not until 1930 that over 50 per cent of the total population was gainfully employed, the change being from 44.3 per cent in 1910 to 48.9 per cent in 1920 and to 53.3 per cent in 1930—a somewhat gradual change of about 4 per cent for each decade. On the other hand, the Negro population gainfully employed has always been a very high proportion of the total Negro population. In 1910 about two-thirds of all Negroes in Manhattan were gainfully employed. By 1920 the proportion had changed

only slightly, but by 1930 it had become smaller, probably because of a change in the type of Negroes migrating to Manhattan in the decade 1920-1930 and to changing industrial conditions. The proportion of Negroes participating in

TABLE III

NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF POPULATION, TOTAL—NEGRO AND ALL OTHER CLASSES, GAINFULLY OCCUPIED, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

A—Total Population				B—Negro			
Year	Total	Gainfully Occupied Number	Percent	Year	Total	Gainfully Occupied Number	Percent
1910...	2,331,542	1,033,579	44.3	1910...	60,534	40,146	66.3
1920...	2,284,103	1,115,966	48.9	1920...	109,133	72,143	66.1
1930...	1,867,312	995,034	53.3	1930...	224,670	140,464	62.5

  

C—All Other Classes			
Year	Total	Gainfully Occupied Number	Percent
1910.....	2,271,008	993,433	43.7
1920.....	2,174,970	1,043,823	48.0
1930.....	1,426,642	854,570	52.0

other fields, particularly in the schools, has undoubtedly increased. The trends for all other classes of the population are very similar to those for the total population, the influence of the Negro population being negligible.

Since the gainfully occupied are counted in the population bracket of those 10 years of age and over, a much closer and more logical comparison would be with those 10 years of age and over rather than with the total population. Table IV gives this analysis.

As was to be expected, the gainfully occupied form a much greater part of the population 10 years of age and over; however, the general tendencies characteristic of this group are characteristic of the total. The very high percentage of Negroes as compared with all other classes is again quite outstanding. The slight increase indicated by the 1920



figure shows that possibly a great number of the new comers to Manhattan about that time came in quest of employment which was easily secured during the War time industrial boom.

TABLE IV

NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER—  
TOTAL, NEGRO AND ALL OTHER CLASSES—GAINFULLY OCCUPIED,  
MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

A—Total Population				B—Negro			
Year	Total	Gainfully Occupied Number	Percent	Year	Total	Gainfully Occupied Number	Percent
1910...	1,900,911	1,033,579	54.4	1910...	53,571	40,146	74.9
1920...	1,875,286	1,115,966	59.5	1920...	95,959	72,143	75.2
1930...	1,626,216	995,034	61.2	1930...	192,995	140,464	72.8

## C—All Other Classes

Year	Total	Gainfully Occupied	
		Number	Percent
1910.....	1,847,340	993,433	53.8
1920.....	1,779,327	1,043,823	58.7
1930.....	1,433,221	854,570	59.6

Another interesting consideration is the relationship of the proportion of the population 10 years of age and over and the proportion of the gainfully occupied 10 years of age and over. In Table V it is shown that in each census year the Negro proportion of all gainfully occupied persons 10 years of age and over exceeded the Negro proportion of all persons 10 years of age and over. This is quite significant, in one sense, for it shows that the Negroes have been able to keep a greater proportion of their total population occupied. The kind of work they did, however, is another consideration.

In this connection it should be observed that the percentage changes in the size of the Negro population and in the number gainfully occupied are quite similar. For the 20 year period the Negro population of Manhattan increased 260.2 percent, while the proportion of those gainfully occu-

TABLE V

PERCENTAGE OF NEGROES AND ALL OTHER CLASSES IN POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER AND PERCENTAGE OF NEGROES AND ALL OTHER CLASSES IN THE GAINFULLY OCCUPIED POPULATION, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

Year	Population 10 Years of Age and Over		Gainfully Occupied	
	Percent Negro	Percent All Other Classes	Percent Negro	Percent All Other Classes
	1910 .....	2.8	97.2	3.9
1920 .....	5.1	94.9	6.5	93.5
1930 .....	11.9	88.1	14.1	85.9

ped increased 249.9 per cent. On the other hand, the population of all other classes decreased by 22.4 percent, and the number of the gainfully occupied decreased by 13.9 percent.

TABLE VI

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN POPULATION 10 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER AND IN GAINFULLY OCCUPIED POPULATION, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910-1930

Class	Population	Gainfully Occupied
Negro .....	+260.2%	+249.9%
All other classes.....	-22.4%	-13.9%

The extent to which Negroes are gainfully occupied has been clearly pointed out. There is no doubt that they form a reasonable, though small, part of the total number of employed workers. From the point of view of labor union activity, then, the next pertinent analysis is that of the type of occupations in which Negroes are engaged. In what industries are they active? Into which industries are they shifting? Are the workers in industries highly or poorly organized? Such questions are most essential in a consideration of the background of their present union status. This analysis will follow two procedures. In the first there will be a brief consideration of the number and proportion of Negroes and other workers in the broad occupational groupings as given

by the Census Reports.<sup>87</sup> The purpose of this section is merely to establish some idea of the types of industries in which Negroes are engaged. There will follow a more detailed analysis of the specific occupations within the broad groups in which Negroes are to be found. This will be closely related to the consideration of the activity of Negroes in craft unions.

Table VII, a numerical distribution of workers over the broad occupational groupings, furnishes the base from which percentages are computed. It also gives a picture of the magnitude of the working group.

For the purpose of this analysis the information given in Table VII is put in Table VIII into a form that allows for comparisons. Inspection of this table brings some interesting facts to light. In the first place, it indicates that Negroes in 1910 formed 3.9 per cent of all workers, 6.5 percent in 1920 and 14.1 percent in 1930. Table V above compares this increase with the population increase. Of the groups, "Agriculture, Forestry, Animal Husbandry & Fishing" and "Extraction of Minerals", Negroes form a very small part—contrary to the situation prevailing in the United States as a whole. As a matter of fact, however, there are few workers, Negro or otherwise, in these groups—less than 0.1 percent of all workers. This is the case because Manhattan is primarily an industrial center. The few classified under these groups probably live in Manhattan and work in some outlying section. The table indicates further that there are five other groups that fall below the average proportion for all occupations. They are the "Manufacturing & Mechanical", "Trade", "Public Service", "Professional Service" and "Clerical Occupations", and they have been "under occupied" at each census period. Over against these are two "over occupied" groups—"Transportation and

<sup>87</sup> See note on pp. 32 and 33, *supra*.

TABLE VII  
 DISTRIBUTION OF GAINFULLY OCCUPIED WORKERS, NEGROES AND ALL OTHERS—IN THE BROAD OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

Occupational Grouping	1910			1920			1930		
	Total	Negro	All Other Classes	Total	Negro	All Other Classes	Total	Negro	All Other Classes
All Occupations	1,033,579	40,146	993,433	1,115,966	72,143	1,043,823	995,034	140,464	854,570
Agriculture, Forestry and Animal Husbandry and Fishing .....	713	—	713	1,598	39	1,559	1,131	68	1,063
Extraction of Minerals ....	—	—	—	388	11	377	344	20	324
Manufacturing and Mechanical .....	367,270	4,473	362,797	380,255	16,034	364,221	260,289	28,164	232,125
Transportation and Communication .....	74,989	2,080	72,009	107,220	8,567	98,653	91,653	14,500	77,153
Trade .....	183,134	2,082	181,052	173,192	3,107	170,085	155,447	7,706	147,741
Public Service .....	15,026	290	14,736	19,017	925	18,092	15,403	1,201	14,202
Professional Service .....	64,686	1,079	63,607	85,386	1,842	83,544	102,038	5,678	96,360
Domestic and Personal Service .....	219,497	28,123	191,374	203,924	38,468	165,456	249,968	77,154	172,814
Clerical Service .....	108,264	1,119	107,145	144,986	3,150	141,836	118,761	5,973	112,788

Communication" and "Domestic and Personal Service"—the latter, tremendously "over occupied", maintained for the three census years a group proportion greater than the average proportion for all groups. In no group do Negro workers dominate in numbers, and in very few do they form as much as ten percent. In 1910 the ten percent mark was

TABLE VIII

PROPORTION OF NEGROES AND OTHER CLASSES IN THE BROAD OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

Occupational Groupings	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	All Other Classes	Negro	All Other Classes	Negro	All Other Classes
All Occupations .....	3.9	96.1	6.5	93.5	14.1	85.9
Agriculture, Forestry, Animal Husbandry and Fishing .....	—	*	0.2	99.8	6.0	94.0
Extraction of Minerals .....	—	—	0.3	99.7	5.8	94.2
Manufacturing and Mechanical .....	1.2	98.1	4.2	95.8	10.8	89.2
Transportation and Communication ....	4.0	96.0	8.0	92.0	15.8	84.2
Trade .....	1.1	98.9	1.8	98.2	5.0	95.0
Public Service .....	1.9	98.1	4.9	95.1	7.8	92.2
Professional Service ..	1.7	98.3	2.1	97.9	5.6	94.4
Domestic and Personal Service .....	12.8	87.2	18.9	81.1	30.9	69.1
Clerical Occupations ..	1.0	99.0	2.2	97.8	5.0	95.0

\* Less than 0.1%.

passed by "Domestic & Personal Service" as shown above; in 1920 this mark was exceeded by "Domestic and Personal Service" and approached by "Transportation & Communication"; and in 1930 it was exceeded by three groups, "Domestic & Personal Service," "Transportation and Communication" and "Manufacturing and Mechanical." Along with this should be considered the percentage distribution of workers over the occupational groups, so that a better view

of the trends can be observed. A study of Table IX reveals that in 1910 considerably over two-thirds, 70.1 percent, of all Negro workers were engaged in domestic and personal service—the type of workers most poorly organized. The majority of the other workers were concentrated in the manufacturing and mechanical industries—with small percentages in the other groups as indicated in the Table. All other classes except the Negro had the highest percentage, 36.5, in

TABLE IX

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GAINFULLY OCCUPIED NEGROES AND OTHER CLASSES OVER THE BROAD OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930

Occupational Groupings	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	All Other Classes	Negro	All Other Classes	Negro	All Other Classes
All Occupations .....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture, Forestry, Animal Husbandry, etc. ....	—	*	*	0.1	*	0.1
Extraction of Minerals .....	—	—	*	*	*	*
Manufacturing and Mechanical .....	11.1	36.5	22.2	34.9	20.1	27.2
Transportation and Communication .....	7.4	7.2	11.9	9.5	10.0	9.0
Trade .....	5.2	18.2	4.3	16.3	5.6	17.3
Public Service .....	.7	1.6	1.3	1.7	0.9	1.8
Professional Service ..	2.7	6.4	2.6	8.0	4.0	11.3
Domestic and Personal Service .....	70.1	19.3	53.3	15.9	54.9	20.0
Clerical Occupations ..	2.8	10.8	4.4	13.6	4.5	13.3

\* Less than 0.1%.

the manufacturing and mechanical industries, followed by domestic and personal service, trade, clerical occupations, etc. It is quite evident that the occupations of the Negro worker of 1910 were not far removed from the traditional "Negro jobs"—those akin to the work he did as a slave.

By 1920, however, the situation had changed considerably. Although the ranking of the groups was almost precisely the same, there had been considerable shifting among groups. Domestic and personal service, though still holding the top rank, accounted for 53.3 percent of all Negro workers—a difference of 16.8 percent. Almost all of the workers released from this group went into manufacturing and mechanical pursuits, and it appears that more of the war-time migrants to Manhattan went into that group than into any other. It is probable, also, that the great demand for industrial workers created by the booming war-time industries opened to the Negro workers opportunities that had previously been closed to them. Such opportunities were apparently eagerly seized and, as is borne out by the 1930 distribution, were used by the Negro workers to get a substantial foothold in the more skilled occupations. Among the other groups with noticeable increases are the "Transportation and Communication" and the "Clerical Occupations". During the same period there was very little shifting from group to group by all other classes. The proportions in the various groups are just about the same.

The 1930 period did not show a big difference from the 1920. Possibly the slight increase in domestic and personal service workers and the decrease in the number of manufacturing and mechanical workers are indicative of the possibility that the great majority of Negro workers who took the opportunity to get out of domestic and personal service remained out. Some, no doubt, returned when industrial competition became keen again as a result of the post-War decrease in production without a similar decrease in the labor market. Likewise, the decrease in the number of manufacturing and mechanical workers and the increase in the number of domestic and personal service workers among all other classes, except the Negro, are evidences of the same force

**TABLE X**  
**PERCENTAGE OF GAINFULLY OCCUPIED MALES AND FEMALES—NEGRO AND ALL OTHER CLASSES—IN THE BROAD**  
**OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS, MANHATTAN, N. Y., 1910, 1920 AND 1930**

Occupational Groupings	1910				1920				1930			
	Negro		Others		Negro		Others		Negro		Others	
	% M	% F	% M	% F	% M	% F	% M	% F	% M	% F	% M	% F
All Occupations	54.7	45.3	70.6	29.4	57.6	42.4	70.1	29.9	58.3	41.7	69.4	30.6
Agriculture, Forestry, Animal Husbandry, etc. ....	—	—	100.0	0.0	94.9	5.1	96.3	3.7	97.1	2.9	96.5	3.5
Extraction of Minerals .....	—	—	—	—	90.9	9.1	99.2	0.8	95.0	5.0	100.0	0.0
Manufacturing and Mechan- ical .....	59.9	40.1	73.4	26.6	53.3	46.7	74.7	25.3	64.3	35.7	78.9	21.1
Transportation and Commu- nication .....	99.6	0.4	95.7	4.3	96.5	3.5	91.7	8.3	98.7	1.3	90.0	10.0
Trade .....	96.2	3.8	86.7	13.3	92.8	7.2	85.1	14.9	92.3	7.7	85.0	15.0
Public Service .....	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	98.2	1.8	98.1	1.9	98.1	1.9	97.6	2.4
Professional Service .....	67.8	32.2	64.1	35.9	66.4	33.6	57.3	42.7	62.1	37.9	54.4	45.6
Domestic and Personal Ser- vice .....	43.7	56.3	43.3	56.7	44.3	55.7	48.7	51.3	42.3	57.7	51.5	48.5
Clerical Occupations .....	87.6	12.4	65.8	34.2	83.8	16.2	53.6	46.4	83.5	16.5	51.7	48.3



at work. On the whole, it can be concluded from this occupational group analysis that the trend of the Negro workers is away from domestic and personal service to the skilled trades and mechanical occupations.

Before leaving the group analysis some mention of the sex composition of the workers should be made. Table X gives that analysis. In all occupations there has been a larger proportion of males than females, and this percentage has remained rather constant. Outstanding is the fact that a much greater percentage of women are gainfully occupied in the Negro group than in others—on the average about 43% of Negro women with an average of about 30% of all others. This is significant from the point of view of organized labor in that it involves the controversial question as to whether or not women can be organized as easily as men. If they can not, as is generally believed, then the high percentage of Negro women workers may be a factor in such difficulties as are encountered in organizing Negro workers. It is also interesting to note that in but one occupational group, Domestic and Personal Service, does the proportion of women exceed that of men. This is true for both Negro workers and others. The proportion of men in other groups of workers, however, is on a gradual increase, and in 1930 the number was slightly greater than the number of women. Further examination of the table will show many other interesting findings.

Now that the problem as a whole has been reviewed, a brief description of each occupational group for the 1910-1930 period will be given. This section is designed merely to determine in various individual occupations the numbers of workers who by virtue of their being workers are the recruits from which union members are selected. In another chapter the problem involved in meeting other specific qualifications for this union membership will be discussed. The groups will be considered in the same order as given above.

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY & FISHING

In this group there were no Negroes in 1910, 39 in 1920 and 68 in 1930. Most of these were farm laborers, and a few, 3 in 1910, were fishermen of some kind. Since New York City, and Manhattan particularly, is not an agricultural area, there are few agricultural workers. As pointed out above, the four employed in this type of work probably live in Manhattan and work elsewhere. There is no New York local union that covers these workers.

EXTRACTION OF MINERALS

The 1910 census contained no mention of this group, and reallocation of workers still puts none in this group; in 1920, however, there were 11 and in 1930 there were 20 Negroes classified in the general category "all occupations". As in the case of the group last discussed there were relatively few workers other than Negroes in this group, and for the same reason. Here, too, there is no New York local union covering the few workers so occupied.

MANUFACTURING AND MECHANICAL

Of all the groups this one is the largest, covering about one-third of all workers in 1910 and 1920 and about one-fourth in 1930. It is composed of so many different occupations that it is necessary to group them in order to facilitate the analysis. The groupings selected correspond very closely with those used in the following chapters to classify the various unions. Allowance is thus made for a comparison of the relative proportion of Negroes in the group and the relative number of Negro union members. For the purpose of this discussion the following groupings were selected: the clothing and textile industries, the building trades, the food, liquor and tobacco industries, the paper manufacturing, printing and publishing industries, the metal and machinery

industries and miscellaneous industries. Many of these occupations will be referred to again when the unions having jurisdiction over them are described.

The clothing and textile industries—Negro dressmakers and seamstresses, numbering 1,508 in 1910, increased to 2,081 in 1920 and fell back to 1,573 in 1930. At the same time the total number of all workers fell sharply, from about 24,000 in 1910 to about 6,000 in 1920. As they are not factory workers, they belonged to no local union. As in the case of dressmakers, milliners and millinery dealers showed an increase of Negro workers from 94 in 1910 to 142 in 1930. Although the twenty-year period added but 48, the number of all workers fell sharply, from 8,192 in 1910 to 2,662 in 1930. The milliners are covered by a New York local union. The number of tailors and tailoresses, also organized, increased greatly among Negroes—from 134 in 1910 to 781 in 1930—again in spite of the fact that the number of all workers fell—from 34,915 in 1910 to 8,724 in 1930. Most significant of all changes in the clothing industries was that in the number of operatives in all branches. In 1910 there were not many more than 150 Negroes. In 1930 there were over 6,000, and at present there must be many more, for there are about 6,000 who are now union members. Among all workers, however, the number of operatives in clothing and textile industries greatly decreased. The factory clothing industries are covered by several old and strong unions, whose recent friendly attitude toward Negro workers has assisted them in obtaining at present a firm hold in the industry.

The building trades. Practically every branch of the building trades group is well organized, usually along craft lines. Although the attitude has differed among the various local unions, they have on the whole, theoretically held open their membership to Negroes. In a manner somewhat sim-

ilar to the trend in the clothing industries the total number of workers in this group decreased from 1910 to 1920, although some branches showed a slight increase from 1920 to 1930. Possibly, the suspending of building activities during the World War caused a great number of these workers to seek employment in plants manufacturing war supplies and other articles incident to the upkeep of armies, etc. The resumption of building just after the war called these workers back to their regular occupations. A few of the changes are shown in the following table.

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Brick and Stone Masons and Tile Layers .....	83	8,457	97	4,334	334	4,300
Builders and Building Contractors .....	41	4,861	15	1,011	75	1,480
Carpenters .....	148	15,554	510	12,506	930	10,337
Electricians .....	41	6,700	101	6,236	238	4,943
Painters, Glaziers and Varnishers (building)	128	13,183	177	9,956	1,558	11,430
Plasterers and Cement Finishers .....	35	3,027	47	1,508	235	2,181
Plumbers and Gas and Steam Fitters .....	24	8,498	61	6,111	126	4,295
Structural Iron Workers (building) .....	4	1,552	6	927	19	1,201
Laborers and Helpers— building construction..	64	2,977	49	2,192	2,256	19,358

At any rate there was a gradual increase in the number of Negro workers. In the case of the painters, glaziers and varnishers the increase was huge—from 128 in 1910 to 1,158 in 1930. Other changes were much less significant. When the building trades unions are discussed, many of these either sharp or gradual increases will be explained.

The food, liquor and tobacco industries. The census returns make few distinctions in this group, throughout the period classifying workers as bakers, operatives in cigar and tobacco factories, and operatives in food and allied industries. In 1910 they did separate brewery workers and candy factory workers. The food operatives here mentioned have, of course, nothing to do with the cooking and serving of food. In the bakery and tobacco industries, which are well organized, the changes are not very great. In fact, they do not keep step with the march of Negro workers in ever increasing numbers into industrial work; the proportionate change in these industries is far less than that for the entire group of workers. Following is a table showing the changes for all occupations classified under the three types given:

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Bakers .....	19	7,354	117	7,451	225	5,954
Operatives—Cigar and Tobacco factories ....	179	14,043	388	4,350	418	2,742
Operatives—Food and Allied industries .....	11	5,522	448	7,911	452	4,990

The paper manufacturing, printing and publishing industries. The 1930 census puts all workers in these industries into two categories, (1) compositors, linotypers and typesetters and (2) operatives—printing, publishing and engraving. In the 1910 and 1920 censuses pressmen were separated. The figures below, however, have classified all on the 1930 basis. It is a well established fact that the printing and publishing industry has been well organized for many years; that its attitude toward Negro workers has been none too cordial will be shown in the discussion of unions in the industry. Moreover, this industry is one that requires a rigid apprenticeship system. The advance of Negroes into this industry has been very slow as the following approximate figures indicate:

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Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Compositors, linotypers and typesetters .....	64	6,880	194	7,017	364	5,035
Operatives—printing, publishing and engraving .....	21	7,690	118	10,135	127	3,097

The metal and machinery industries. Slight variations in the classifications of this group make comparisons from period to period a bit risky; however, three occupational classifications have remained rather constant throughout the period. The figures for machinists show a very slight increase from 1910 to 1920 and a decrease from 1920 to 1930. For operatives—iron, steel, machinery, vehicle—the same is true, while the number of tinsmiths and sheet metal workers was on the increase during the whole twenty-year period. In speaking of these workers it should not be overlooked, however, that the numbers are so small that the slight changes are hardly significant. Following is an approximate statement of the changes:

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Machinists .....	78	8,578	256	10,141	240	4,665
Tinsmiths and Sheet Metal Workers .....	3	2,174	9	2,055	27	1,056
Operatives—Iron, Steel, Machinery, Vehicle ..	5	941	377	9,100	233	3,484

Miscellaneous industries. In the manufacturing and mechanical group there are several other occupations that do not fit very well in any of the above categories. Most of these are very well organized and in none of them have there been any outstanding changes. Some have shown gradual increases, and some have even doubled from period to period, but even that is not very significant because the numbers were

so small at the outset. In toto, the progress has been almost negligible as is shown by a perusal of the selected occupations and their figures which follow :

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Blacksmiths .....	18	3,461	54	1,766	33	734
Cabinet Makers .....	4	1,615	24	1,568	37	1,209
Engineer (stationary) ..	267	6,084	433	6,473	307	4,292
Firemen (except locomotive and fire department) .....	186	3,809	843	6,481	1,236	4,923
Foreman and Overseers (manufacturing) ....	15	4,588	79	4,617	84	2,300
Jewelers and Watchmakers (not in factory) ..	5	2,091	18	1,294	26	788
Managers and Officials (manufacturing) ....	6	3,326	12	6,636	54	5,668
Manufacturers .....	48	18,136	11	12,693	63	7,188
Painters, Glaziers and Varnishers (factory) .	9	1,941	34	1,621	96	1,532
Upholsterers .....	19	1,420	23	1,145	55	947

#### TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Having 14,500 Negroes and 77,153 other workers in 1930, the broad occupational group, transportation and communication, ranks sixth in the list of all gainfully occupied workers and third for gainfully occupied Negro workers. In the group there are several occupations in which Negroes, mainly because of their "peculiar combination of strength and agility", have gained prestige. These workers are the long-shoremen and stevedores, garage laborers, chauffeurs, truck and tractor drivers and mail carriers. On the other hand, there are some occupations into which they have had extreme difficulty in entering in some cases because of the hostile attitude of unions some of which exclude Negroes by a constitutional bar. Among these occupations are brakemen, captains—masters—mates and pilots, conductors, motormen,

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switchmen and telegraph operators. The figures below show the exact numerical distribution of workers in selected occupations in this broad group:

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Brakemen, steam railroad .....	—	—	—	—	4	359
Captains, Masters, Mates and Pilots .....	7	744	36	1,649	14	778
Chauffeurs and Truck and Tractor Drivers..	486	8,633	1,518	25,207	5,438	32,596
Conductors, steam railroad .....	2	1,059	—	844	1	610
Conductors, street railroad .....	1	2,395	—	1,544	4	802
Draymen, Teamsters and Carriage Drivers ....	781	21,649	584	14,560	154	1,715
Garage Laborers .....	31	759	131	1,557	1,178	2,981
Locomotive Engineers ..	—	—	—	—	5	275
Locomotive Firemen ...	—	—	—	—	12	214
Longshoremen and Stevedores .....	632	9,358	3,876	18,374	2,365	8,521
Mail Carriers .....	37	1,848	98	1,720	384	1,417
Motormen, street railroad	2	2,650	—	1,444	3	1,145
Sailors and Deck Hands	89	1,887	748	6,447	639	5,355
Switchmen and Flagmen, steam railroad .....	—	933	6	1,141	24	708
Telegraph Operators ...	3	822	14	1,666	1	366
Telephone Operators ...	135	3,772	251	8,012	78	7,157

Practically all occupations in this group are covered by labor unions.

TRADE

Of the total number of workers in this group Negroes form a very small part—1.1 per cent in 1910, 1.8 per cent in 1920 and 5.0 per cent in 1930. There are in this group several types of occupations in which there never were more than one or two Negroes—bankers, brokers & money lenders, proprietors, managers & officials of advertising agencies



and wholesale dealers, importers and exporters. In a few other groups, however, Negroes form a small percentage, and in one—porters and helpers in stores—their proportion was about one-sixth in 1910, one-fifth in 1920 and almost one-half in 1930. As most of the occupations of this group are individual in nature, few of them are organized. Among the organized are the following, in two of which—"clerks" and "salesmen"—the proportion of Negroes is negligible throughout the period:

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
"Clerks" in stores....	127	23,146	221	17,299	450	9,313
Laborers—porters and helpers in stores ....	1,256	7,253	1,584	7,042	2,891	6,875
Salesmen .....	99	49,813	183	49,643	708	51,533

#### PUBLIC SERVICE

Few of the occupations in this broad group are unionized; however, it is interesting to note in passing that a few Negroes are finding their way into them. In 1930 there were many more Negro firemen, marshals and sheriffs and detectives, policemen, city officials, soldiers, sailors and marines than in 1910. These increases are, however, far smaller than the increase in the proportion of Negroes among the gainfully occupied.

#### PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Since the individual nature of work in the professions makes labor unions only slightly effective, but few of them are unionized. In these unions Negro workers have increased in number correspondingly to the total increase. Following is a record of a selected few in which unionization is possible because both individual and cooperative work are practiced.

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Actors and Showmen..	313	6,820	278	8,485	1,108	9,532
Chemists, Assayers and Metallurgists .....	10	650	20	1,154	32	821
Designers .....	1	2,129	18	2,539	47	2,060
Draftsmen .....	—	971	3	968	13	1,094
Musicians and Teachers of Music .....	362	8,859	610	8,695	1,608	9,638
Teachers—school .....	52	12,430	126	13,294	434	13,678

DOMESTIC AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

The great masses of Negro workers are still—as always—concentrated in this group. It has always held first place in the ranking of the broad occupational group for Negroes. As pointed out above, one of the reasons for this situation is the fact that among the occupations covered in this group are those that have always been associated with Negroes—primarily because of their previous condition of servitude in the United States. Although the actual numbers increased in all the selected occupations in this group, except that of laundresses (not in laundry), the proportion of the total number of workers engaged in this type of work has been for the past 20 years becoming less and less. Inspection of the following figures for selected occupations shows, among other things, that for the entire period about one-half of all elevator tenders were Negroes; that Negro laundresses, though decreasing in number, dominated that occupation by a small majority in 1930; that the proportion of Negro laundry operatives had increased to about one-half of the group in 1930; and that one occupation, porters—steam railroad—classified separately in 1920 and 1930 has been almost completely composed of Negroes. Most of these occupations, except laundresses (not in laundry), are being unionized with varying degrees of success. On the

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Barbers, Hairdressers and Manicurists ...	455	11,896	1,033	9,956	1,859	10,810
Boothblacks .....	22	2,300	29	1,630	219	1,205
Charmen and Cleaners	294	4,636	307	5,037	723	5,368
Elevator Tenders ....	2,794	5,839	3,117	7,641	4,988	12,093
Housekeepers and Stewards .....	387	6,019	770	7,249	1,146	7,570
Janitors and Sextons.	1,191	13,237	1,476	11,004	2,354	9,396
Laundress (not in laundry) .....	3,244	10,707	2,530	6,144	1,351	2,576
Laundry Operatives ..	591	6,542	1,121	6,428	5,837	12,146
Porters—steam railroad	—	—	1,996	2,252	3,038	3,276
Servants .....	13,152	95,640	17,760	84,496	37,911	109,386
Waiters .....	2,345	23,252	3,169	25,383	5,374	32,478

other hand, the occupation that uses the greatest number of both Negro and all other workers—servants—has not been successfully unionized. Negro waiters had become the greater proportion of all waiters by the end of the twenty year period.

#### CLERICAL OCCUPATIONS

Occupations in this group have had exactly the same classification throughout the period 1910 to 1930—except as indicated in the 1910 grouping of bookkeepers, cashiers and accountants. Although the total numbers engaged in each

Occupation	1910		1920		1930	
	Negro	Total	Negro	Total	Negro	Total
Accountants and Auditors .....	77	25,663	10	8,555	22	4,739
Bookkeepers & Cashiers			139	24,850	208	16,140
Clerks—(except "clerks" in stores) .....	528	48,516	2,151	75,974	4,014	68,359
Messenger, Errand and Office boys .....	390	12,850	601	6,830	1,310	7,524
Stenographers and Typists .....	92	17,420	210	26,038	340	18,048

occupation increased greatly from 1910 to 1920 and fell back to about the 1910 figures in 1930, the number of Negroes thus engaged doubled from 1910 to 1920 and 1920 to 1930; however, when the small number engaged in these occupations in 1910 is noted, the fact that the number of these workers doubled becomes almost insignificant. The workers in these occupations are at the same time more and more enjoying the advantages that come through unionization, for most of them are well organized now.

The study of the occupational distribution of workers as given in the Federal census reports describes the situation only up to 1930. Undoubtedly, some changes and shifts among the occupations have been made since that time. Under the National Recovery Administration Negro labor made many significant moves, as will be shown in a later section dealing with that particular topic. Between the 1930 census and the present, however, there has been a survey which shows that on the whole Negro labor was maintaining the significant gains it had made after the War-time and post-War industrial booms and since the enactment of effective legislation providing for restriction of immigrant labor from Southern Europe—the type of labor that had been the greatest menace to Negro labor and had made its advance into the skilled and semi-skilled trades slow and arduous.<sup>25</sup>

We are now in a position to view summarily the trends of Negroes in occupations and to note whether they have met the first essential qualification for becoming union members—that is being engaged in trades and industries that are unionized. It has been shown that from the time Negro workers

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix I—Franklin J. Keller (Director, National Occupational Conference), "The Negro at Work in New York City"—paper delivered at the Conference on the Economic Status of the Negro, held in Washington, D. C., May 11-13, 1933, sponsored by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, *infra*.

in New York became "free men" and thereby became theoretically at liberty to go into types of occupations for which they felt themselves qualified and from which they could get greater economic returns—higher pay, shorter working hours, better working conditions and the benefits of trade unionism—they have carried on a tense and ceaseless struggle to free themselves from those occupations—mainly domestic and personal service—to which they were more or less bound by their ex-slave status during the reconstruction period. The advent of the twentieth century found them making some progress, for unquestionably they had by that time successfully begun an industrial advance by gradually withdrawing from domestic and personal service and slowly breaking through the many prejudicial barriers into manufacturing and mechanical pursuits, trade and transportation and other skilled and semi-skilled industries. It was this tendency, reaching its maximum gain during the World War period, that decidedly changed the status of Negroes in occupations, established a greater equilibrium in their employment, proved them beyond all doubts as efficient workers in industrial pursuits as they were in domestic and personal service and, finally, changed the whole economic status of Negro workers. By 1930, as shown by Table IX, but slightly over one-half of all gainfully occupied Negroes were still engaged in domestic and personal service—54.9 per cent as against 70.1 per cent in 1910. Moreover, 20.1 per cent found themselves in manufacturing and mechanical industries, 10.0 per cent in transportation and communication and about 5.0 per cent each in trade, professional service and clerical occupations. Other significant tendencies, similar to those found by Greene & Woodson for the total Negro working population of the United States, are revealed by this table:<sup>80</sup> (1) Negroes constitute a greater percentage of all

<sup>80</sup> Greene and Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner*, p. 345.

gainfully occupied persons than they do of the total population; (2) there is a greater percentage of Negroes gainfully occupied within their group than of all other classes within their group; (3) Negro females form a greater proportion of the total gainfully occupied Negroes, than do females of all other classes in the total number of those gainfully occupied. It should not be overlooked, however, that in occupations that require apprenticeship Negroes are conspicuously absent. These occupations are usually highly organized. Moreover, it is noticeable throughout the analysis that the increases in the number in practically all trades that are well organized—painters, bricklayers, plumbers, plasterers, printers, machinists, electricians, upholsterers, seamen—masters, mates, pilots and captains—were comparatively very small. It seems, therefore, that although the concentration of Negroes in domestic and personal service is being broken, the released workers, though scattering, are finding it difficult to penetrate the "locked doors" of the skilled and highly organized trades. Cognizance of this situation leads one to question to what extent the unions themselves are factors in preventing the Negro's entry into these occupations. A study of the relation of the comparatively few Negroes who have entered these occupations, as shown by the preceding analysis, to the organized labor movement will throw much light on this question. The following chapters will consider this matter.

## CHAPTER II

### UNION MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITY BEFORE THE WORLD WAR

THE preceding chapter, which gave an analysis and summary of the early industrial distribution of gainfully occupied workers in New York City and Manhattan Borough, showed that shortly after the freeing of Negro slaves in New York State in 1827, there began a keen struggle for employment, with resulting competition among individual workers at first and among groups of workers later. The gradual increase in the labor supply, both Negro and all others, soon gave employers a decided advantage in bargaining with individual workers. Realizing this condition, the workers began at an early date—as far back as 1808 for Negro workers and much earlier for white workers—to band themselves together for purposes of mutual aid and protection in matters related to labor, especially in the mechanical and skilled pursuits. The tendency of Negroes to branch out from the menial work of domestic and personal service to these skilled and mechanical pursuits therefore brought them in close contact with such early efforts at organization of workers as were ventured. Resulting from these associations were various attitudes, as described below, attitudes that formed the basis of the policies which later organized labor movements followed in their dealings with Negro workers. The contents of this chapter deal briefly with these early and later efforts at unionization and with the relation thereto of Negro workers up to the time when the great industrial change brought about by the World War altered in a degree the conditions underlying the labor movement.

Before the first actual count of the number of Negroes in labor unions in New York City and the accompanying description of their activity in these unions were made in 1906 by Miss Mary White Ovington, practically nothing had been done in the way of attempting to determine definitely what part Negro workers played in the organization of labor, that is from a local point of view. Several books cover the problem very well from a national aspect, and in numerous places make references to the New York situation. As in the case of the determination of the early industrial activity of Negroes such notations, along with many isolated newspaper reports, articles, etc., must be relied upon in order to get at least the available, however incomplete, information on this subject. An attempt will therefore be made in the following paragraphs to bring together most of these notes in order to present a picture of the situation before the World War.

It seems that the first attempts of Negroes to organize were for the purpose of mutual aid, protection and benevolence. Their main functions were caring for the sick and aged, giving relief to those of their numbers who were out of work and to serving as employment agencies. Among the very first of such societies was the New York African Society for Mutual Relief, with a membership composed mainly of the free Negro workers of that time. This organization was founded in 1808 and chartered in 1810. Among the members were all types of skilled and unskilled workers such as machinists, printers, master builders, farmers, tailors, blacksmiths, shoemakers, notary publics and commissioners, longshoremen, seamen and common laborers.<sup>1</sup> Collective bargaining was apparently not the concern of this particular organization. No doubt many similar associations were established from that time to the decade prior to the Civil War, when greater agitation and contact among the workers seems to have spurred the formation of several others.

<sup>1</sup> Reported in *The New Era*, February 17, 1870.



In 1850 the American League of Colored Laborers was organized in July.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this organization was "to promote union among the people of color in the trades and to recommend the education of the youth of the race in agriculture, the mechanic arts and commerce". Further, it proposed to establish a fund to aid Negro mechanics to venture into businesses of their own. In addition to its purpose the organizing body set forth seven suggestions in regard to Negro life. They were:

(1) That the editors of newspapers present were to publish the news of the meeting; (2) that there should be an Executive Committee with its office in New York for the transaction of business; (3) that the communities where there were colored people should also form associations in cooperation with the Executive Committee; (4) that every association should publish its proceedings in the papers; (5) that an Industrial Fair should be held in New York City in the second week of May, 1859, the proceeds of which were to be divided so that 70 per cent should be given to the producers, and 30 per cent for carrying out the projects of the organizations; (6) that colored mechanics, artisans, and agriculturists be requested to exhibit the specimens of their skill and industry at the several National Fairs; and (7) that an agent should be employed by the Executive Committee to present their views to all the colored people. The President of the organization was S. R. Ward; the Vice-Presidents were L. Woodson and Frederick Douglass.<sup>3</sup>

The following year, 1851, a convention of the organization was held in New York. Most outstanding in the discussion was the continued encouragement of Negroes to improve in the mechanical arts and in the education of the members. The creation of a Mutual Savings Bank further to encourage thriftiness among the workers and to credit the group with

<sup>2</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

a financial institution was also suggested.<sup>4</sup> It is obvious, then, that although the function of this organization was not limited to aiding in the solution of labor problems alone, these workers were cognizant of the value of organization in furthering the progress of the group.

About this time Negroes were being used by employers to reduce and weaken the growing strength of certain types of labor organizations. This was particularly true in the longshore work because that work, being mainly unskilled and requiring great physical strength, permitted an easy substitution of any group of workers for another. Thus, the introduction of Negroes as strike-breakers—a move that later caused great friction between them and the white workers and resulted in a bitter attitude among white workers toward admitting Negro workers to the unions that the whites had organized—began as early as 1855, when in New York Negro workers were employed in the place of striking longshoremen, then mainly Irish.<sup>5</sup> From this experience, however, the Negro workers profited little, for when the strike ended they were readily displaced by the return of the white stevedores.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the ill feeling engendered by their reluctant but unavoidable acceptance of this work has never been completely forgotten and has from time to time bobbed up as a definite handicap against the Negroes' getting membership in unions dominated by whites. At that early date the white workers did not realize, as did their successors, the wisdom of admitting Negro workers to their unions as a means of controlling their activity. Because of this color prejudice, as described in the preceding chapter, and the added economic factor, competition, conflicts between Negro and white longshoremen continued to 1907 and were

<sup>4</sup> *The New York Tribune*, March 20, 1851.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Tribune*, January 18, 1855.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1855.

numerous during and after the World War. But the situation took on a new aspect in 1895 according to Sterling Spero. He writes:

Negroes first got a permanent footing on the New York docks in 1895 when the Ward Lines used them to break a local strike. For some years after the strike this company used Negroes exclusively. Today, with about half its force colored, this company still uses Negro labor more extensively than any other line in the port. Strikes in 1899 and 1907 further strengthened the Negro's position on the New York water front, while the labor shortage incident to the World War finally made him a factor of major importance.<sup>7</sup>

In further reference to the situation just prior to and during the Civil War it should be noted that other efforts at unionization or affiliation with existing unions were made by Negroes. An issue of the *New Era* reported that there were many Negro seamen sailing to and from New York Port.<sup>8</sup> These 3,500 men varied in occupations from captains to deck-hands and kitchen help. In 1863 they successfully organized a union, the American Seamen's Protective Union Association, which was incorporated on April 15 of that year. This organization, too, was primarily fraternal and benevolent in purpose. Incidentally, its members were credited with being quite competent as is evidenced by the fact that in 1868 they made a successful and satisfactory voyage, working as a crew of sailors under Captain George Brooks, from New York to Europe and Africa.

During that year an interesting event occurred in New York City. The third convention of the National Labor Union convened there on September 21, 1868.<sup>9</sup> The Na-

<sup>7</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *The Black Worker*, New York, 1931, p. 199.

<sup>8</sup> *The New Era*, February 17, 1870.

<sup>9</sup> *The New York Tribune*, September 22, 1868.

tional Labor Union, probably one of the first attempts to federate the existing local, state and national unions into one national body, was organized on August 20, 1866, at Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>10</sup> Displayed before the meeting hall was a flag bearing the message, "Welcome to the Sons of Toil, from the North, South, East and West." Among the subjects of the resolutions were: the organization of trade unions, strikes, the apprentice system, female labor, etc. But, there was no mention of Negro labor and its relation to this national organization of trade unions in the United States. At the next session, which convened in Chicago, August 19, 1867, the question of the Negro worker did come before the house. A committee appointed to study the matter reported that the problem was too involved to be considered at that meeting. After much discussion of whether or not the Negro workers were willing to affiliate with this organization and of the general question of the reason for the existence of a Negro problem, the matter was finally settled by the adoption of a resolution stating that "the constitution already adopted by the Labor Congress precludes the necessity of any action of this body in behalf of any particular class of the laboring masses."<sup>11</sup> In the third convention, New York, the resolutions related to strikes, immigration, eight-hour day, female labor, currency, labor conditions and others, but nothing was said of Negro labor.<sup>12</sup> At the next session, held in Philadelphia, August 16-23, 1869, however, a resolution stating that the National Labor Union would know "no north, south, east, west, neither color nor sex, on the question of the rights of labor" was adopted.<sup>13</sup> Although these declarations of the policies of the

<sup>10</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>11</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 159, 160, 161.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.

National Labor Union toward Negro labor seemed, at least outwardly, fair and reasonable, some of the Negro labor leaders and delegates to these conventions were evidently not altogether pleased. This attitude is evident from the fact that some Negro workmen in Baltimore conceived the idea of a National Labor Convention for Negro workers. In 1869 they announced that such a meeting would be held in Washington in December of that year.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted, however, that it was not suggested that Negro labor unions stop sending delegates to the white national organizations.

In agreement with this movement the workers of New York began plans to cooperate by advertising the meeting and preparing to send delegates. On November 11, 1869, delegates numbering fifty engineers, four hundred waiters, seven basket-makers, thirty-two tobacco twisters, fifty barbers, twenty-two cabinet-makers and carpenters, fourteen masons and bricklayers, fifteen smelters and refiners, two rollers, six moulders, porters, five hundred longshoremen and twenty-four printers assembled at the Zion Church to choose delegates as their representatives at the National Labor Convention.<sup>15</sup> Such action is conclusive evidence that these mechanics were well aware of the impending necessity for Negro workers to organize nationally as well as locally. Other similar meetings followed—to select delegates, to discuss Negro labor in general and to boost the National Convention. It is reported that on October 22, 1869 a meeting was held in Room 24 of Cooper Institute in this city and that about one week later on October 28, 1869 there was another in Zion Church.<sup>16</sup> In the following month, on November 16, 1869 at Bethel Church of New York City, met the Colored Men's and Women's Labor Reform Union.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>15</sup> *The New York Times*, November 12, 1869.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, October 29, 1869.

Among the speakers were a Georgia State Senator, A. A. Bradley, and a representative of the National Labor Union, Mr. Troup. Mr. Troup merely mentioned the existing difficulty of color prejudice in the National Labor Union, while Senator Bradley emphasized the need of labor organizations, especially among his people.<sup>17</sup> Both favored the organization of Negro workers, even if such organization had to be separate from white workers. During the next three weeks enthusiasm continued to run high in New York and elsewhere, and on December 6, 1869 the Convention met as per schedule. Following are excerpts from Wesley's report on it:

On December 6, 1869, the National Labor Convention of Colored Men assembled at Union League Hall, Washington, D. C. One hundred fifty-six delegates from every section of the country were present on the opening day. The convention was called to order by Isaac Myers, who spoke of the object of the convention and urged the cooperation of all delegates in the success of the movement. Mr. George T. Downing of Rhode Island was then chosen temporary chairman and Mr. H. S. Harman, Recording Secretary. Mr. William U. Sanders of Nevada made the motion for the appointment of a committee on credentials of one delegate from each state and territory. The delegates who had been elected were from Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, Connecticut, New Jersey, Nevada and Michigan.

The convention was permanently organized with Mr. James M. Harris of North Carolina as President. Committees were appointed on education, finance, business, platform and address, female labor, homesteads, travel, temperance, cooperative, labor, bank savings and agriculture. The platform of the convention covered the following subjects: (1) The dignity of labor, (2)

<sup>17</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, p. 176.

A plea that harmony should prevail between labor and capital, (3) The desirability of an interchange of views between employers and employees, (4) Temperance, (5) Education, "for educated labor is more productive and commands higher wages," (6) political liberty for all Americans, (7) The encouragement of industry, (8) The exclusion from the trades and workshops regarded as "an insult to God and an injury to us," (9) Immigrant labor, which should be welcomed and coolie labor which was an injury to all working classes, (10) The establishment of cooperative workshops, building and loan associations, (11) Gratitude for the agencies interested in Negro education, (12) Protection of the law for all, (13) The organization of workmen's associations which should cooperate with the National Labor Union, (14) Capital, which was not to be regarded as the natural enemy of labor.<sup>18</sup>

It seems from this report that independent Negro unionism on a national basis was getting off to a good start. Later developments, however, caused quite a change in the entire situation.

After the convention interest in the organization of Negro labor continued to run high, at least for a while. The Workmen's Assembly, continuing its activity, had by 1870 assisted in the establishment of three organizations in New York—the Saloon Men's Protective and Benevolent Union, the Colored Waiters' Association and the First Combined Labor Institute.<sup>19</sup> In the same year another important incident occurred, one of a more general interest. There was issued an announcement of the second meeting of the National Labor Union to be held on January 9, 1871. The call read: "To the Colored Workingmen of the United States, Trades Labor and Industrial Unions."<sup>20</sup> When the

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>19</sup> Glocker, T. H., *The Government of American Trade Unions*, 1913, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, p. 182.

meeting convened, delegates from New York were among those present. Soon after this convention, however, interest in the National Labor Union began to subside, although other organizations carried on for a while. September 13, 1871 was the day set for a parade of organizations affiliated with the International Workingmen's Association. It was then that Negro labor organizations appeared for the first time side by side with the other affiliated internationals.<sup>21</sup> In spite of this, the efforts to organize Negro labor separately from white labor—whether in independent Negro unions or in Negro auxiliaries affiliated with white unions—were seemingly foredoomed. In addition to the failure of the labor leaders to consider the fundamental necessity of organizing all workers in one group, their problems being common and alike, for the purpose of bargaining with employers rather than of fighting other groups and bargaining with employers too, there was a further difficulty inherent in their leadership itself. From this point of view various explanations of the failure of early efforts to organize Negro workers have been given. Abram L. Harris writes:

The efforts of Negro working-class action did not materialize for four reasons: (1) the decreasing importance of the Negro in industry; (2) the growth of craft unionism, which excluded the Negro mechanic; (3) the mutual antagonism between the white and black laboring classes; and (4) the social outlook of Negro leadership.

Under the leadership of ambitious politicians these movements were foredoomed to uselessness and early extinction. Had there been in these organizations fewer politicians like Langston and Pinchback and more labor leaders like George Downing, Sella Martin,<sup>22</sup> and Wesley Howard, they might have become

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>22</sup> The Reverend Sella Martin was appointed to represent the National Negro Labor Congress at the 1870 Paris World's Labor Congress.



the spearhead of Negro labor organization. Instead their energies were dissipated by political agitation and bickering.<sup>23</sup>

Writing along the same lines, Charles H. Wesley states :

Political connections and influences caused the early organization of Negro labor to fail in the same way as the white organizations failed. Slowly political leadership secured its hold and the organizations soon lost their efficiency. The leaders themselves often encouraged this situation. On May 17, 1874, the *New National Era*, of which Frederick Douglas was editor, carried an editorial upon the subject—"The Folly, Tyranny and Wickedness of Labor Unions." The editorial described in detail that which was regarded as the mischievous influence of trades unions upon the industrial interests of the country. This editorial was written when both the white and the colored unions had failed, and the influence of their failure had caused other newspapers to assume this position. . . .<sup>24</sup>

While these early efforts had failed to organize effectively the great masses of workers, both white and Negro, they did not mark the end of such attempts. Two other organizations, an old one revived and a new one created, pressed the fight onward. The Noble Order of the Knights of Labor, organized in 1869, held its first National Convention in 1876, at which time it reasserted its intention, "to make no distinction of race."<sup>25</sup> Although the principle was not followed very closely by all of the District Assemblies of the Knights of Labor, District Assembly No. 49, New York was quite fair and true to its declarations. This is borne out by incidents that occurred at the Richmond Convention. When a Richmond hotel at which the delegates from New Martin was selected because of his knowledge of the French language and his broad views on the labor problem.

<sup>23</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *The Black Worker*, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Wesley, C. H., *op. cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255, 256.

York were to live refuse to admit the Negro delegate along with the others, the whole New York delegation of District Assembly No. 49, supporting their Negro fellow delegates, refused to accept accommodations at that hotel and moved to another where all the delegates were treated equally. At this convention the Governor of Virginia was to speak. Someone suggested that the policy of "no distinction of race" could be no better expressed than by having this Negro delegate from New York, Mr. F. J. Ferrell, introduce the Governor. Believing that the established customs of that locality would not permit such a gesture, the General Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, Mr. Powderly, decided that it would be a better move to have Mr. Ferrell introduce him, and then, he would introduce the Governor. This latter suggestion was followed. Despite this and other public demonstrations of its policies, the Knights of Labor were not successful in completely destroying race prejudice in its various forms in the American labor movement; it should, however, be credited with having done more toward that end than had its predecessors or successors—particularly the American Federation of Labor. "Its persistence in the organization of Negroes should be attributed to an idealism of industrial brotherhood which knew neither race, creed, nor color. But this very idealism precipitated a conflict between the Order and the trade unions, from which it emerged shattered and irretrievably beaten."<sup>28</sup>

Upon the "fall" of the Knights of Labor there came into prominence the American Federation of Labor, an organization that has battered its way through many labor difficulties to its present position as the recognized legitimate representative of the American labor movement. Organized in 1881 and founded on the principle of local autonomy for affiliated unions, it soon began to make various declarations

<sup>28</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *The Black Worker*, p. 45.

of policy toward Negro workers,<sup>27</sup> but, since the Federation has no sovereign power over its local bodies, such declarations carried only the weight of ordinary counsel.<sup>28</sup> The attitude of the locals toward Negro workers was determined more or less by the social background and customs of the locality in which the local operated. Therefore, as New York was somewhat liberal on questions relating to Negro labor, the situation there was more favorable than in some of the Southern cities.

The coming of the twentieth century brought with it little change in the position of labor. Describing the situation in New York City in 1900, John Gilmer Speed, declaring that there were no Negro artisans in New York, stated further that if there had been any, the trade unions would have prevented them from working—by not allowing them membership.<sup>29</sup> By 1906 the situation had changed just a little. Buckley writes:

. . . while there are many unions that are, in their constitution, open to all men, there are others that bar the door tight against any man with an admixture of African blood. There is further, a conviction that even the supposedly open unions do not always give the black brother a cordial welcome. . . . An investigation of the rosters of trade unions would in all probability show only a minority of them as members.<sup>30</sup>

During the same year, Miss Mary White Ovington, a fellow of the Greenwich House Committee on Social Investigations, made known the results of "months of inquiry" in a paper.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix II for review of position of A. F. L. on Negro Labor, *infra*.

<sup>28</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*—for good treatment of Negro and A. F. of L., pp. 87-115.

<sup>29</sup> Jno. Gilmer Speed, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> William L. Buckley, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Ovington, Mary W., "The Negro in the Trade Unions in New York City," *The Annals*, vol. xxvii, May, 1906, pp. 551-58.

As this article gives about the most authentic information available on the membership and activity of Negroes in New York City at that time, it will be relied upon to a great extent; in fact, it will be practically paraphrased.

Because the unions made no color distinction in their records, she found it difficult to get an accurate count of the actual members. In spite of that fact, she proceeded to establish contact with the union officials and members and arrived at the following figures, which probably show little error, such, if any, being "one of under, not over-statement."

TABLE XI  
NEGRO UNION MEMBERS IN 1906

	1906
Asphalt Workers .....	320
Teamsters .....	300
Rock Drillers and Tool Sharpeners .....	250
Cigar Makers .....	121
Bricklayers .....	90
Waiters .....	90
Carpenters .....	60
Plasterers .....	45
Double Drum Hoisters .....	30
Safety and Portable Engineers .....	26
Eccentric Firemen .....	15
Letter Carriers .....	10
Pressman .....	10
Printers .....	6
Butchers .....	3
Lathers .....	3
Painters .....	3
Coopers .....	1
Sheet Metal Workers .....	1
Rockmen .....	1
Total .....	1385

Using an estimate of 27,039 gainfully occupied Negroes in New York City at the close of 1905, she computed the percentage of union men—5 per cent, which represented a probable gain of union members over the last decade.

*Type of unions in which Negroes held membership:* Miss Ovington, concluding that the unions having Negro members represented the strong organizations, points out that "the engineers and firemen are old and strong organizations; so are the bricklayers. . . ." Subway construction during that time gave prominence to the rock drillers. The carpenters commanded, through good organization, four dollars per day. Another well organized union was that of the asphalt workers who "are able to enforce their demands." The cigar makers' union was of long standing. Since these represented the strong unions of the day, it can be said that Negroes "seem[ed] to be in strong labor groups."

*Activity of Negro members:* Only one of the unions reported a Negro officer, James L. Wallace, walking delegate of the asphalt workers. He is credited with increasing the union's membership from 250 in 1903 to 850 in 1906. A little over one-third of this number were Negroes. His ardent activity also gained for the union a wage increase—from forty-three to sixty-eight cents on a day's work. As the union's representative to the Central Federated Union and as walking delegate of his union, Wallace was considered "by its best workers as a man of intelligence and discretion." Although the other Negro union members held no offices, various reports tend to show that they were, on the whole, good members. "Satisfactory" was the descriptive term used by the teamsters and cigar makers while "a number of locals report 'as good as the average'".

*Unions not having Negro members:* Although it is observed above that the unions that had Negro members were among the strong and highly organized, there were other unions of the same type that had no Negroes. Representative of these were the machinists, structural iron workers, plumbers and garment makers. In one hundred and two (102) of the trades, or divisions of trades, listed by the

Central Federated Union there were no Negroes. Miss Ovington offers two reasons: Of the comparatively small number of Negroes in New York at that time few were skilled workmen. The reason is also given in the analysis of occupations in the last chapter. On the other hand, there were "tens of thousands of foreigners and of American-born white men" who went to New York in quest of work. Entering into competition "with the best of the world," these few Negro skilled workers found the struggle severe; many of them consequently turned to unskilled tasks because of the resulting lack of employment at their regular occupations. Another factor was the trade unions. In efforts to protect their members (the great majority of whom were white men) they would sometimes limit their memberships by putting up high and prohibitive initiation fees and allowing new members to come in only on the recommendation of their friends already within the ranks. While this policy was supposedly applied to all newcomers, it worked greater hardships upon Negroes, for, in the first place, they were not able to pay the high entrance fees, and, in the second place, they had few friends within the unions who would recommend them for membership. Ovington believes that "this discrimination is primarily economic, not racial; but it is hard to determine where the economic motive ends and race or caste discrimination begins. Undoubtedly men are debarred from unions in New York solely because of their color." Continuing, she pointed out that it is a difficult task to attempt to determine the number of Negroes denied membership because of color, since many other reasons for their non-admission—as the closed books of the union—were present at the same time. Then, too, she observes, many of these workers did not put forth great enough effort to get membership. "Our Negro population," she wrote, "come to us chiefly from the Southern States, and it has

been taught that labor organization is its enemy. It is timid, too, in attempting to gain its rights. Colored men have heard that white men lay down their tools rather than work with them, and they sometimes give up their trade without trial. Still, there are Negroes of skill and persistence who have been denied admittance to the union, and who have suffered because of this."

*Strike-breaking:* Two cases of strike-breaking were reported in the Ovington study. One was a longshore strike in Brooklyn, against which large numbers of unskilled Negroes were imported from the South as strike-breakers. As in previous strikes of this kind there resulted the creation of hatred against these workers although many of them did not know that a labor dispute was in progress when they were employed. The other was a printers' strike conducted by Typographical Union No. 6, whose attitude toward Negro members had not been very encouraging. At the time the strike was called there was one Negro member. It is reported that an outstanding New York firm used Negro printers, trained in an industrial school, as strike-breakers. Soon thereafter the union invited other competent Negro printers to join so that they would not work as strike-breakers. Many did join and immediately began receiving strike pay. In this case, strike-breaking was profitable to Negro workers, for it opened to them employment opportunities that had been closed because of their lack of union membership. Strike-breaking by workers against unions that have denied them membership is justifiable, Miss Ovington believes, but, on the other hand, strike-breaking by Negroes against unions that have opened freely their memberships to Negroes is unjustifiable and should be avoided by Negroes because it tends to create the worst kind of racial antagonism and this, in turn, perpetuates rather than overcomes the existing difficulties.

In conclusion Miss Ovington gave the following prediction of the future of Negro labor and its relation to organized labor:

As the Negro gains in productive efficiency he will become increasingly important to the world of organized labor. Education will raise his standard of living, and he will give his support to the effort to gain proper human conditions for all who work. It is only through the solidarity of labor's interests that he can hope to be saved from remaining in an exploited class. Every colored man in New York who stands with the organization, working for it in its defeat or its success, gains respect not only for himself but for his race. He comes in contact with men of his own class, and in the best way that such contact can come about, as a workman by the side of another workman. Caste lines disappear when men are held together by a common interest, and as they feel their dependence one upon another, they gain in sympathy and in fraternal spirit.

On the assumption that Miss Ovington's ideas are representative of the sentiments of the sound thinking people who concerned themselves with labor problems, it was apparently realized at this early date that the success of the organized labor movement hinges on the harmonious working together of all workers through the same agents—the same unions. The main concern of the Negro workers, then as before, was in increasing the numbers and the skill of their artisans and mechanical workers so that competition with white workers could be dealt with efficiently and in tearing down the hostility of labor unions so that these Negro workers could affiliate themselves with the recognized labor movement of the land and enjoy the advantages of such memberships.

The occupational tables in Chapter I show that the number of Negroes in skilled occupations in Manhattan at that time was exceedingly small. It has been pointed out above that only the skilled trades were well unionized. It is evident,



therefore, that there was a gap between the Negro and union membership. During the last years of the first decade of the twentieth century some efforts were made "to bridge the gap," through the extension of educational opportunities, one of the suggestions made by Miss Ovington. In this case it took the form of evening industrial schools and vocational schools to train and make workers proficient in the arts and trades. In 1909 a vocational school was opened for boys.<sup>53</sup> Among the courses of instruction were some in wood-working, bench and lathe; mechanical drawing—making and reading of plans and specifications, making drawings and blue prints; machine shop practice—use of lathe, shaper, planer, drill-press, miller, grinder and other mechanics; bench work; filing; assembling; tool making; printing and allied trades. This was not a school for Negro boys alone, although they were urged to enroll.<sup>53</sup> In the same year a mechanics association, whose activity was limited to Negro workers, was organized.<sup>54</sup> Its membership was composed of Negro artisans who were brought together for mutual aid in securing and holding work, in assisting in securing union membership for members of the association and in stimulating friendship which, it was hoped, "shall work for the solidifying of the race without creating, at the same time, those antagonisms for the men of other races that have at times marred efforts at solidification." Of the fifty members there were many non-union as well as union craftsmen who were at the time engaged in work other than that for which they were trained. In spite of these efforts apparently little progress was made before the World War.

<sup>53</sup> *The Survey*, October 2, 1909, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1910 Mary White Ovington made a second count of Negroes in the trade unions of New York.<sup>28</sup> For purposes of comparison this list is placed beside the 1906 list. Several interesting observations appear. The large decreases in

TABLE XII  
NEGRO UNION MEMBERS IN 1906 AND 1910

	1906	1910
Asphalt workers .....	320	350
Teamsters .....	300	400
Rock-drillers and tool-sharpeners .....	250	240
Cigar-makers .....	121	165
Bricklayers .....	90*	21
Waiters .....	90	not obtainable
Carpenters .....	60	40
Plasterers .....	45	19
Double drum hoisters .....	30	37
Safety and portable engineers .....	26	35
Eccentric firemen .....	15	0
Letter-carriers .....	10	30
Pressmen .....	10	not obtainable
Printers .....	6	8
Butchers .....	3	3
Lathers .....	3	7
Painters .....	3	not obtainable
Coopers .....	1	2
Sheet metal workers .....	1	1
Rockmen .....	1	not obtainable
Total .....	1,385	1,358

\* "The large number of bricklayers in 1906 is questioned by the man, himself a bricklayer, who made the second counting. However, the number greatly decreased in 1908 when the stagnation in business compelled many men to seek work in other cities."

the number of Negro members in unions of the building trades—bricklayers, carpenters and plasterers—are significant. Together with the relatively small increases, except in

<sup>28</sup> Ovington, Mary W., *Half a Man*, New York, 1911, pp. 95-99.

the number of teamsters, asphalt workers, safety and portable engineers and letter carriers, this evidence supports very well Miss Ovington's remark, that "In some of the highly skilled trades, to which few colored men have the necessary ability to demand access, the Negro is likely to be refused, while the less intelligent and well-paid forms of labor press a union card upon him."<sup>86</sup> But, whether "the necessary ability to demand access" is the actual limiting factor is questionable. It might be said with even more truth that the entrance of the Negro worker into the skilled trades has been limited by the unions that controlled these trades and refused or limited Negroes in their membership. Helen Tucker tells of the experience of a West Indian carpenter, who, working in Brooklyn, gave "entire satisfaction to his employer."<sup>87</sup> When the union delegate discovered that he held no union membership, he ordered him (the carpenter) to quit. Forthwith, the carpenter applied to the union for membership—which was denied him. Therefore, this man, being denied both union membership and the carpenter's job, probably had to leave his trade—a skilled trade—and accept some menial, unskilled, poorly paid work because the union refused to accept him. The remarks made by the Negro bricklayer who secured figures for Miss Ovington are also significant in this connection:

A Negro [he says] has to be extra fit in his trade to retain his membership, as the eyes of all the other workers are watching every opportunity to disqualify him, thereby compelling a super-efficiency. Yet at all times he is the last to come and the first to go on the job, necessitating his seeking other work for a living, and keeping up his card being but a matter of sentiment. While all the skilled trades seem willing to accept the Negro

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Tucker, Helen A., "Negro Craftsmen in New York", *Southern Workman*, vol. xxxvi, October and November, 1907, p. 545.

with his travelling card, yet there are some which utterly refuse him; for instance, the house smiths and bridge men who will not recognize him at all. While membership in the union is necessary to work, yet the hardest part of the battle is to secure employment. In some instances intercession has been made by various organizations interested in his industrial progress for employment at the offices of various companies, and favorable answers are given, but hostile foremen with discretionary power carry out their instructions in such a manner as to render his employment of such short duration that he is very little benefited. Of course, there are some contractors who are very friendly to a few men, and whenever any work is done by them, they are certain of employment. Unfortunately, these are too few.<sup>88</sup>

At any rate, it is obvious that the inefficiency of Negro workers was by far not the greatest obstacle that they had to overcome to gain and maintain a worthwhile status in skilled trades. In addition to this handicap, which was probably present in some degree, there were at least two others, one economic in nature, the monopoly of employment in the skilled trades by white workers through their labor unions, and the other, social in nature, denial of union membership to Negroes on account of color prejudice.

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that Negro workers, like others, realized the value of organization as a means of protection of their economic interests and of facilitation of their progress through collective bargaining to better the conditions under which they labored. Their early efforts were mainly in the form of mutual aid and protective associations. Soon, however, they attempted to affiliate themselves with the labor organizations created by their white fellow workers. Finding membership in most of these unions closed to them because of adverse economic and social con-

<sup>88</sup> Ovington, *Half a Man*, p. 89.

ditions, they, of necessity, were forced to work as strike-breakers. Their next efforts were at independent Negro unions, both local and national. With the failure of these, mainly because of corrupt political leadership, and the similar failure of efforts of white workers the National Labor Union and the Knights of Labor with its District Assemblies came on the scene. They were, however, quite unsuccessful in permanently unionizing both white and Negro labor. Later the American Federation of Labor, founded on the principle of local autonomy for its affiliated bodies, was organized, and from its very beginning began to make declarations to the effect that its activities would make no distinction because of color, race or creed. These resolutions have been most ineffective in preventing discrimination against Negro workers in its affiliated bodies. Although these early trade unions differed widely on the subject—from a complete exclusion of Negro workers to an acceptance of them on an equal basis—there was a general tendency among them either to completely ignore the presence of the Negro worker or to shun questions relating to him. In consequence, the beginning of the World War period found the great majority of Negro workers, both skilled and unskilled, still outside of the American organized labor movement.

## CHAPTER III

### UNION MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITY FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD WAR TO THE N.R.A. PERIOD

UNFORESEEN developments gave impetus to economic activity in the United States and most fortunately created the opportunity for Negro labor to become a paramount factor in the industrial world and to strive again to make itself an integral part of the American labor movement. With the outbreak of the World War in Europe in 1914 there occurred several related events which in turn necessitated a great increase in the labor supply in large industrial centers such as New York City in the United States. Among the first of these events was the departure of many new and old aliens for their mother countries so that they could be available for service at home. On the other hand, immigration had virtually come to a standstill. At the same time the United States began to receive large orders from belligerent countries for munitions and other war supplies. These converging causes resulted in an unexpected labor shortage and the accompanying necessity to tap the only available labor reservoirs—the previously unused skilled and unskilled Negro labor of the North and the Negro labor of the South.<sup>1</sup> The result was the inevitable attraction of Southern Negroes to these Northern industrial centers, expressed in the unprecedented waves of migration during and just after the World War.<sup>2</sup> A further outcome of this situation was a happy change in the whole industrial status of Negroes and

<sup>1</sup> Herman Feldman, *Racial Factors in American Industry*, New York, 1931, p. 16; James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, New York, 1930, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> For an exhaustive study on Negro migration see, Louise V. Kennedy, *The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward*, New York, 1930.

in their relationship to the organized labor movement, for it seemed that the newcomers had "made an impression on many Northern employers so favorable that they will probably be retained in Northern industry in large numbers."<sup>3</sup>

Periods of migration: This whole migratory movement may be conveniently divided into two periods. Influenced mainly by increased war-time manufacturing and the labor shortage caused by the absence of foreign laborers who had returned home, the first migration occurred between 1916 and 1919, reaching the zenith in 1917-1918.<sup>4</sup> Following this period was the depression of 1920-1921 which caused a temporary cessation of manufacturing and a consequent similar cessation of Negro migration. However, industry began to recover during 1922-1923. In the meantime, the three per cent immigration law, restricting foreign immigration to three per cent of those of each nationality resident in the United States in 1910, had been passed. This restriction on immigration, of course, held down the foreign labor supply. As a consequence, there was another wave of migration of Southern Negro workers to Northern industrial centers with the revival of industry during the period, late 1921-1923.<sup>5</sup> It was during these periods that Negro workers began to get a foothold in industry in New York City as elsewhere.

Causes of migration:<sup>6</sup> Little time and space need be devoted to the causes of these migrations, except for the fact

<sup>3</sup> George E. Haynes, "Negro Migration and Its Implications—North and South," an address before 77th Annual Meeting of the American Missionary Association, Springfield, Massachusetts, October 23, 1923, p. 6. (In files of the National Urban League, 1133 Broadway, New York.)

<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Wesley, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>5</sup> George E. Haynes, "Negro Migration and Its Implication—North and South," *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Herman Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 17; George E. Haynes, "Negro Migration and Its Implications—North and South," *op. cit.*, p. 5; Charles H. Wesley, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

that they were predominantly economic because of the circumstances of the time, they were like other migrations. For classifying these, however, there have been adopted various categories, under two of which all the causes can be conveniently grouped, (1) "economic" and (2) "social". Under the economic fall such causes as: (1) greater opportunity for employment, (2) higher wage rates and (3) pressure of crop failure in 1914 and 1915 in the case of the Southern farmers. All of these may be characterized as creating within the worker a desire for greater economic opportunity. In addition to these there are others not so closely tied up with the economic aspect of life, particularly in the case of the Negro migrant from the South—the "social" causes, such as: (1) desire for political freedom and legal protection, (2) desire for cultural development through free admission to public institutions of learning—schools, museums, etc.—and (3) desire for freedom of usage of all public places. Many such causes can be enumerated, but it is not necessary to do so here. Writing on this subject, Charles S. Johnson stated:

The causes of the Negro migration northward have been variously catalogued and may be grouped under two heads: "Economic Causes" and "Sentimental Causes." The migration of 1916-19 was distinguishably different in character, though not seriously different in volume, from the migration of 1921-1924. With the restlessness, which was economic at bottom, were other forces.

Along with the rest of the section the Negroes of the South had felt some measure of the moving times; literacy had increased, and, slowly but gradually, standards had developed. The hundreds of small and obscure schools of the South sending out yearly their graduates had not been without effect; the development of good roads, and increased mobility, the newspaper—particularly when it could bring such vivid flashes of the outside world as the *Chicago Defender*, the *New York Age* and



other Negro newspapers, all aided in producing a dissatisfaction with the monotony and drudgery of farm life which no mere argument or proposed measures of reform could still.

. . . The migration of 1916-1918 was a leaderless mass-movement. They were ready for the spark of suggestion which touched them off and sped them blindly northward.<sup>7</sup>

Another report gives:

The intelligent Negro has long believed that his only escape from the measures of suppression which still exist is to go to the North, and he has seized the opportunity whenever it was presented to him. The present unprecedented influx of black workers from the South is merely the result of a sudden expansion of opportunity, due to a non-depleted labor market in the North, but basic causes for his migration are inherent in the social and economic system which has retarded his progress for years. The Negro is beginning to appreciate his own value and duties and is proceeding to the North, where he feels he can enjoy a fuller measure of justice.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the causes may have been, the fact that the Northern labor markets were flooded with Negro labor, mainly unskilled, is the point of interest in this discussion; we will therefore pass on to a further consideration of the situation from this point of view.

Number of migrants: To determine the exact number of Negro migrants to New York City, and to Manhattan Borough, particularly, is quite impossible as no census of the migrants was taken. However, since the first period of migration was very near the time of Federal Census of 1920, some idea may be obtained from a consideration of the increase in the number of gainfully occupied workers from

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, *op. Cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Negro Migration in 1916-1917*, U. S. Department of Labor, 1919, p. 155.

1910 to 1920. In Chapter I it was pointed out that the number of gainfully occupied Negroes in Manhattan increased from approximately 41,000 in 1910 to approximately 72,000 in 1920—or about 76 percent for the period. This figure may not be representative as there is no way of telling just how many of the migrants remained in New York City. Emmett J. Scott stated:

New York State with New York City as its center has received a considerable number. New York City, however, has been principally a rerouting point, in fact, many of those who subsequently went to New England first went to New York City. The State of New York recruited its labor here. There came to New York probably no less than 75,000 Negroes, a large portion of whom stopped in New York City, although Albany, Poughkeepsie, Buffalo and smaller cities received their share.\*

But, these statistics cover only the first period, 1916-1919. An examination of the census figures of 1930 reveals that there was an even greater increase of gainfully occupied workers in Manhattan during the 1920-1930 decade than during the 1910-1920, the figures ranging from approximately 72,000 in 1920 to approximately 140,000 in 1930, or an increase of about 95 per cent for the decade. At any rate, it is safe to conclude that the increase was enormous and that it inevitably had a decided effect on the whole labor situation in New York.

Types of migrants: A complete consideration of these Negro migrants as possible recruits for labor unions calls for an analysis of the types of migrants. It was pointed out in Chapter I that up to 1910 a very small portion of Negroes

\* Emmett J. Scott, "Negro Migration during the War," p. 46, in *Preliminary Economic Studies of the War*, edited by David Rinley and published by Oxford University Press, American Branch, New York, 1920.

were engaged in those trades in which the whites were well organized. On the other hand, the great majority of them were engaged in domestic and personal service—porters, janitors, elevator tenders, etc.,—types of labor in which even the whites were not organized and could not be organized.<sup>10</sup> War-time migration, however, tended to change this situation somewhat, for among the migrants were many highly skilled workers, those who could qualify for union membership on the basis of efficiency, although many, of course, were unskilled workers. Charles H. Wesley distinguished three groups among them:<sup>11</sup> (1) the unskilled, composed chiefly of farm workers and domestic servants who left the South, seeking higher wages and better living conditions and planning to do any work they found available; (2) the skilled workers—carpenters, bricklayers and iron workers—who also sought higher wages and better working conditions; (3) the adventurous, those who merely wanted to make a change and, therefore, were willing to take any sort of work. However divergent the types, most of them entered into unskilled work. Of the particular situation in New York City James Weldon Johnson wrote:

On the whole, New York was more fortunate in the migrants she got than were some of the large cities. Most of the industries in the manufacturing cities of the Middle West—except the steel-mills, which drew largely on the skilled and semi-skilled labour from the mills of Alabama and Tennessee—received migrants from the cotton-raising regions of the lower Mississippi Valley, from the rural, even backwoods, districts, Negroes who were unused to city life or anything bearing a resemblance to modern industry. On the other hand, New York drew most of her migrants from cities and towns of the Atlantic seaboard states, Negroes who were far better prepared

<sup>10</sup> *Negro Migration in 1916-1917*, p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> Wesley, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

to adapt themselves to life and industry in a great city. Nor did all of New York's migrants come from the South. The opportunity for Negro labour exerted a pull that reached down to the Negroes of the West Indies, and many of them came, most of them directly to New York. Those from the British West Indies average high in intelligence and efficiency. There is practically no illiteracy among them, and many have a sound English common school education. They are characteristically sober-minded and have something of a genius for business, differing almost totally, in these respects, from the average rural Negro of the South. Those from the British possessions constitute the great majority of the West Indians in New York; but there is also a large number who are Spanish-speaking and a considerable, though smaller, number who are French-speaking. The total West Indian population of Harlem is approximately fifty thousand.<sup>13</sup>

The presence of even these few Negro skilled workers caused some labor leaders to suspect that difficulties would arise because, just as unskilled Negroes could be used to fight the organization of unskilled whites—as was evident from past experiences of labor organizers—skilled Negroes could be used to break down the craft unions.<sup>14</sup> Such an hypothesis presupposed, of course, that the Negro workers here involved would not become a part of the organized labor movement. The continued hostility of crafts unions against the Negro workers, moreover, seemed to have almost assured that condition. That such hostility existed and that Negroes were excluded from industrial jobs thereby was an established fact.<sup>14</sup> New York press comments as early as 1916 express clearly the public opinion on the question.

<sup>13</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>14</sup> *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, p. 135.

<sup>14</sup> George E. Haynes, "Negro Migration and Its Implications—North and South," *op. cit.*, p. 10.

For more than a year, a migration of men and women of color to northern states has been going on that has already deprived thousands of southern farmers of cheap labor, and the movement bids fair to continue. That it will have both good and bad effects is obvious. It will distribute the Negro population more evenly throughout the states and thus tend to diminish race friction. But unless there is a change of spirit on the part of northern unions, it will increase the danger of labor troubles in case of industrial depression.<sup>15</sup>

In the beginning such a migration of Negroes would increase the present race friction in the north. Within certain limits a racial minority is unpopular directly in proportion to its members. Only as it increases to the point where political and economic power makes it formidable, does it overcome opposition. The Negroes' competition for jobs and homes will probably exacerbate relations. As the Negroes increased in numbers they would not only seek menial and unskilled work, but also strive to enter skilled trades where they would meet with antagonism of white workers. Moreover, the Negroes would be forced to seek homes in what are now regarded as "white" neighborhoods, and a clamor would be raised at each new extension of their dwelling area.<sup>16</sup>

Confronted by the presence of the increased numbers of Negro workers, the trade union movement of New York City had a choice of about four positions that it might take: (1) to continue ignoring the presence of Negro workers by excluding them from the unions, (2) to assist them to organize separately into independent Negro locals or federal locals of the American Federation of Labor, (3) to organize them separately into auxiliary bodies responsible to white locals—as a means of controlling them—and (4) to accept them into

<sup>15</sup> Emmett J. Scott, "Negro Migration during the War," *op. cit.*, p. 159, quoting *The New York Globe*, July 31, 1916.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157, quoting *The New Republic of New York City*, July 1, 1917.

mixed locals on an equal basis of membership. In the period between the close of the World War and the beginning of the N.R.A. all four of these avenues found expression in the labor movement of New York City.

The post-War competition of Negro and white workers, created by recent Negro migrations, and the new agitation for economic and political freedom, led by some of the "economic radicals" of the time, on the one hand greatly intensified the existing antagonistic feeling between white and Negro workers and, on the other, developed within the ranks of the Negro workers a much stronger class consciousness and organization consciousness. The outstanding proponent of the "pride of race" movement was Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican Negro, who sponsored the "Back to Africa Movement" through his organizations, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the African Communities (Imperial) League.<sup>17</sup> Much like the Garvey movement was the "self-sufficiency movement," prominent about the same time, as both "idealized a sort of self-contained racial economy. One looked to Africa as the place where its dreams were to be realized, while the other hoped to build in America."<sup>18</sup> However, both of these movements accomplished practically nothing in organizing Negro workers. Representative of the "economic-radicalism" movement were A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, who, after breaking their relationship as editors of the *Hotel Messenger* published by the Headwaiters and Sidewaiters' Society of Greater New York because they persisted, against the will of the Society, in publishing information about the insufficient wages and bad working conditions of the waiters, founded in 1917 a magazine of their own, the "militant and revolutionary" *Mess-*

<sup>17</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 388.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

enger.<sup>19</sup> The purpose of this publication was to serve as a mouthpiece for labor unionism and an organ for socialism among Negroes. One of the first efforts of this magazine to stir Negro workers to action was its description of the Negro worker of the post-War period.

Writing about this type of Negro worker, Abram L. Harris quotes the *Messenger* Radicals as saying that this "New Negro" demanded "the full product of his toil" and that his immediate aim was "more wages, shorter hours and better working conditions."<sup>20</sup> Referring to the "New Negro" and socialism, he points out that "the 'New' Negroes or economic radicals were the first expression of socialism in the Negro world. They maintained that the Socialist party represented the interest of workingmen and, since 99 per cent of the Negro people were workers, the Negro's logical alignment was with the Socialist party."<sup>21</sup> They taught the philosophy of the labor solidarity of workers, black and white, supporting themselves on the theory that the economic interests of Negro and white workers were identical, i. e., "the getting of more wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions," and that unorganized workers of any kind were a potential menace to organized labor.<sup>22</sup> Because, under the rule of the American Federation of Labor, the masses of Negro workers had remained unorganized since they were not admitted to most of the American Federation of Labor's affiliated bodies, the *Messenger* vehemently opposed the Federation. Among other things this militant magazine asserted that instead of aiding in the solution of the labor problems, the American Federation of Labor was "the most wicked machine for the propagation of race

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>20</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 390.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

prejudice in the country." <sup>23</sup> This antagonism against the American Federation of Labor was further confirmed in 1918 by the failure of a group of Negro leaders and the American Federation of Labor to work cooperatively in creating the machinery necessary for the organization of Negro workers. In 1918, a resolution <sup>24</sup> offered by a group of Negro leaders, headed by Eugene Kinckle Jones of the National Urban League and Fred R. Moore of the *New York Age*, was introduced in the convention of the American Federation of Labor at St. Paul, Minnesota. After reviewing the admittedly favorable statement of the attitude of the American Federation of Labor in regard to the organization of Negro workers, it read:

We are willing to cooperate with the American Federation of Labor in bringing about the results of the recent conference, and would make the following suggestions and recommendations, which with your approval, we shall proceed to carry out to the best of our ability.

First, we suggest that you prepare a statement, along the lines of the quotation from you given above, and send it to us for approval and then to be given to the Negro press throughout the country as expressing your position on matters connected with the relationship between Negroes and white workingmen.

This statement, in our judgment, should contain a clear exposition of the reasons why certain Internationals may exclude colored men as they do by constitutional provisions and still be affiliated with the A. F. of L. whose declared principles are opposed to such discrimination. This we think necessary because that stated facts above alluded to will be familiar to the leaders among the colored people, particularly to editors and ministers, whose cooperation it is essential to secure if the best results are to be obtained.

<sup>23</sup> *Messenger*, May-June, 1919, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> For full account, see Appendix II, *infra*.



We would suggest further that you consider the expediency of recommending to such internationals as still exclude colored men that their constitutions be revised in this respect.

Second, that a qualified colored man to handle men and organize them to be selected for employment as an organizer of the American Federation of Labor, his salary and expenses of course, to be paid by the American Federation of Labor.

Third, that for the present we meet at least once a quarter to check up on the results of our cooperative activities and to plan for further extension of the work, if satisfactorily conducted.

Fourth, that you carry out your agreement to have your Executive Council voice an advanced position in its attitude towards the organization of Negro workingmen and have these sentiments endorsed by your St. Paul Convention in June, and this action be given the widest possible publicity throughout the country.<sup>25</sup>

Of these recommendations embodied in the resolution the Committee on Organization gave the following report:

It is with pleasure we learn that leaders of the colored race realize the necessity of organizing the workers of that race into unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and your committee recommends that the President of the American Federation of Labor and its Executive Council give special attention to organizing the colored wage workers in the future. We wish it understood, however, that in doing so no fault is or can be found with the work done in the past, but we believe that with the cooperation of the leaders of that race much better results can be accomplished.<sup>26</sup>

Although the committee recommended that "special attention" be given "to organizing the colored wage workers in

<sup>25</sup> Report of *Proceedings*, 38th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, St. Paul, Minnesota, June 10-20, 1918, pp. 198, 199, 205.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

the future", no means for doing so were provided and consequently nothing was actually done. In the following years, other resolutions of a similar nature were introduced in the American Federation of Labor Conventions—only to receive the usual meaningless endorsements of the conventions. It should be pointed out also that these "economic radicals" did not limit their charges to the American Federation of Labor alone: they "often expressed dissatisfaction with the older Negro political and intellectual leaders who were either held to be the tools of the capitalist class or ignorant as to modern political and economic problems."<sup>27</sup> Be that as it may, time marched on, and the Negro workers in New York as elsewhere remained, on the whole, unattached to the organized labor movement.

Having thus declared themselves in opposition to the practices of the American Federation of Labor, Randolph and Owen and the other radicals turned to the unionization of Negro workers in industrial unions, and, working out from New York, organized in 1920 the Friends of Negro Freedom,<sup>28</sup> an organization whose purposes included unionization of the Negro migrants, protection of Negro tenants, advancement of cooperation, and the organization of forums for publicly educating the masses.<sup>29</sup> During the same period, the National Association for the Promotion of Labor Unionism among Negroes, with Owen as president and Randolph as secretary, was started.<sup>30</sup> It was short-lived, failing shortly after the president and secretary had made vain efforts to unionize the Negro laundry workers of New York and to organize a branch of the Journeymen Bakers' and Confectioners' International Union.<sup>31</sup> The last big gesture of

<sup>27</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 393.

<sup>28</sup> *Messenger*, April-May, 1920, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 395.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 396.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

the "economic radicals" and the *Messenger* came in 1923 when they proposed another organization, United Negro Trades, to serve the Negro workers as the United Hebrew Trades and the Italian Chamber of Commerce served the Jewish workers and the Italian workers, respectively.<sup>82</sup> That such an organization was at least begun is shown in the paragraphs below.

In the meantime, various entirely local efforts either to organize Negro workers or to determine the status of those already organized were made. The *Messenger* Radicals themselves made an early effort, not mentioned above. In November, 1917 the United Brotherhood of Elevator and Switchboard Operators was organized by A. P. Randolph and C. Owen. Of the 10,000 Negro elevator operators in New York City at that time 600 had joined the union within its first three weeks of existence.<sup>83</sup> It soon drew up an agreement to be forced upon the employers through the aid of a strike. Among the demands of this agreement were an eighteen dollar (\$18.00) a week minimum wage payable weekly and an eight-hour day. To effect the agreement through a strike reliance was placed upon two factors, (1) an anticipated increase in membership to 8000 and (2) an anticipation of the inability of employers to fight the strike effectively because of the shortage of labor owing to the increased factory work and to the stop of immigration. The fact that in New York and Brooklyn a monopoly of elevator and switchboard jobs was enjoyed by Negro workers also added to the expectation of success of the strike.<sup>84</sup> Despite these seemingly extraordinary advantages on the side of the union, the strike did not come to pass, and as a result both Randolph and Owen forsook the union.<sup>85</sup> Later the opera-

<sup>82</sup> *Messenger*, July, 1923, p. 757.

<sup>83</sup> *Messenger*, November, 1917, pp. 14 and 20.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 394.

tors organized the Elevator Operators' and Starters' Union Local 16,030 of the American Federation of Labor. It is reported that since that time nothing has been heard of either the new or the old organization.<sup>38</sup>

In 1919 the Consumers' League (New York City), the Bureau of Women in Industry, the Women's Trade Union League (New York) and other interested organizations set out to determine what part the Negro woman worker played in the industrial life of New York City during the World War and what her industrial status was at its close. The result was published as a study of the colored woman worker.<sup>39</sup> This survey revealed that, although industry had called on white male workers, Negro male workers and white female workers to meet the demand for labor made necessary by increased production during the World War period, the labor supply was still inadequate; consequently, it then turned to the last available supply of labor, the colored women workers.<sup>40</sup> Of the 242 establishments visited 217 employed 2,185 colored women in industrial pursuits, in the majority of which Negro women were employed for the first time. Among these industries were the needle, button, candy, leather goods, marabou, paper box and bag, millinery, flower and feather and miscellaneous trades.<sup>41</sup> In these, however, the majority of the women were used in semi-skilled or unskilled operations because of their newness to the industries. In one, however, the needle trade, which was even then becoming highly organized, they did very well and, it is reported, averaged the highest wages.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *New Day for the Colored Woman Worker*; a study of colored women in industry in New York City, 1919.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13 and 14.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Of the 175 women with whom interviews were held twelve per cent were union members, holding membership in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of the World, the Fancy Leather Goods Union and several locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.<sup>41</sup> Of the colored women workers in all the factories visited, less than .003 per cent were union members, a situation that is explained in several ways: <sup>42</sup> (1) most of the colored workers were in low paid, unorganized industries—paper box making, candy making and toy making; (2) many of them worked in the low-priced shops of industries where colored workers were not unionized; and (3) even in the shops where the white women were well organized, Negro women working there seldom held union membership. This study puts the responsibility for the general lack of organization among Negro women at that time on two main factors: (1) "lack of understanding of the value of collective bargaining on the part of the colored workers" and (2) "racial prejudice on the part of the white workers", such prejudice being expressed mainly in the unwillingness of some white workers to work along with colored workers and by the refusal of some unions to accept colored workers who really understood unionism.<sup>43</sup> In an attempt to explain the first factor, the report of the combined organization pointed out that because the Negro woman worker was new to industry, she was extremely careful in her efforts to get a permanent foothold and not to do anything that might hinder her advancement. In other words, the fear of losing her job because of union activity was ever in her mind. Education of colored women in trade unionism and acceptance of them freely in the unions and on the "councils of deliberation" would tend to destroy

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> *New Day for the Colored Woman Workers*, p. 24.

this obstacle.<sup>64</sup> Recognizing these obstacles, the Committee closed its report with the following recommendations:

- I. That greater emphasis be placed upon the training of the colored girl by:
  - A. More general education.
  - B. More trade training through apprenticeship and trade schools.
- II. That every effort be made to stimulate trade organization among colored women by:
  - A. Education of colored women workers toward organization.
  - B. Education of colored workers for industrial leadership.
  - C. A keener understanding of colored women in industry among white organized and unorganized workers.
- III. An appreciation and acceptance of the colored woman in industry by the American employer and the public at large.<sup>65</sup>

That the entry of Negro women into industry at this time marked the beginning of their slow but fruitful efforts to gain a recognized position in the organized labor movement—especially in the needle trades where most of the industrial workers are engaged—will be made clear in the discussion on unionism in the needle trades in later chapters.

In 1919 and 1920, when Local No. 3—The New York Central Railroad—and Local No. 1—The Pennsylvania Railroad—of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees were organized, two more efforts at independent Negro unionism in New York City got under way. These, it seems, have been able to weather the storm, for they still exist and op-

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24 and 25.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

erate under labor agreements with the railroad companies.<sup>46</sup> The Brotherhood itself, however, was organized in 1918 by Rienzi B. Lemus, working with employees of the New York Central Railroad and of some New England railroads.<sup>47</sup> Mr. Lemus, at present the Grand President of the Brotherhood, stated that under his leadership the Brotherhood made the presentations to the Board of Railroad Wages and Working Conditions of the United States Railroad Administration which controlled the Nation's Carriers, 1917-1920. The only result of these presentations was the award by the Director General of Railroads of the 240 hour work month and overtime for all dining car cooks—waiters. Further, this award was preserved after the end of Federal control of the railroads by contracts negotiated with—and still in force today—the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, the Boston & Albany Railroad, the Boston & Main Railroad, the New York Central Railroad (East), the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Southern Railway, and on the Seaboard Air Line Railway.<sup>48</sup> Locals No. 1 and No. 3, whose membership consists almost entirely of Harlem Negroes who work on runs out from New York, are at present under these contracts. Over a period of years the Union has grown and has effectively handled the problem of representing its members and securing better wages and better working conditions according to the Grand President.<sup>49</sup>

About 1925, one of the conservative institutions of Manhattan became interested in the Negro's industrial and union status. This institution, The New York Urban League, therefore, set out to get definite information on the situation.

<sup>46</sup> Interviews with Rienzi B. Lemus, November 2nd and 5th, 1935.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* For further information on these unions see Chapters V and VI, *infra*.

To this end, it had a study made by The Labor Bureau, Inc., in 1925.<sup>90</sup> The second part of the report of this Preliminary Survey gave an analysis of remarks concerning the situation in New York City evoked during interviews with union officials and workers. So concisely written is this part that it is included below in Appendix III so that the reader may have the advantage of viewing it in its entirety. The "Suggestions as to Action", which form the last section of Part II of the Report briefly summarize the situation and state the recommendations; consequently, they will be considered here also. They are:

Suggestions as to Action.

It is assumed that one of the most practical ways of bettering the status of Negroes in industry is to extend their organization in Unions.

The above brief survey of the facts makes it clear that while there are obstacles due to general racial prejudice, the traditions or practices of unions, and the attitude of Negroes, such obstacles are not insuperable and have, in some cases, been overcome by practical work in detail than by any amount of general propaganda.

... Where the larger number of Negroes work, and are less well organized, intensive application may be made by approaching both the union organization and the Negroes in the particular industrial group. Any influence, time, special knowledge or funds which the Urban League has to offer may be concentrated at these strategic points.

It is possible that the development and training of Negro organizers would help.

<sup>90</sup> *Preliminary Survey of Industrial Distribution and Union Status of Negroes in New York City*: Prepared by the Labor Bureau, Inc., for the New York Branch of the Urban League. (This report as found in the files of the National Urban League is undated. On the strength of memories of James H. Hubert, Executive Secretary of the New York Urban League, and Ira DeA. Reid, former Research Director of the National Urban League, the year 1925 was accepted as correct.)



It is possible that a special central body representing Negro union locals, with a trained secretariat, would be able to extend the movement. In establishing any such body, however, care should be taken to secure the authorization and good will of the proper union authorities. Mr. Frayne of the American Federation of Labor should be consulted on this.

Similar central bodies already exist in the form of the United Hebrew Trades, the Italian Federation of Labor, and the Women's Trade Union League. Some derive their support from affiliated local unions, others, at least in part, from interested international unions, and others from individual contributions.

It will be found that in the case of some unions where Negroes are not well organized, whites are equally poorly organized as with the bookkeepers, stenographers and accountants. There may be poor places to begin work—except in cases where the organization of Negroes might furnish a key to the situation.

In some cases where no union has jurisdiction, Federal Locals of Negroes may be established. Such locals are affiliated directly with the American Federation of Labor. In other cases, such as private laundresses, dressmakers and servants, organization will be difficult if not impossible.

There is certainly an opportunity here for devoted, patient and useful service, which will establish a real center of cooperation between the labor movement and the Negroes in New York. Such work, of course, ought to be continuous, since its usefulness would grow with experience, under acquaintance-ship, and confidence on the part of all concerned.

Interesting to note is the fact that here again there is a recommendation for a central body to represent Negro union locals and Negro workers—a body similar to the United Hebrew Trades, the Italian Federation of Labor and the Women's Trade Union League. As pointed out above, the "economic radicals" had previously suggested such a central

body in the form of an organization, United Negro Trades. Early developments brought this plan to realization.

Growing out of these efforts and those of other philanthropic and welfare organizations was a conference of trade unionists at Arlington Hall on the Lower East Side of Manhattan on May 23, 1925.<sup>51</sup> In attendance at this conference were delegates of thirty white and Negro local and international unions. Thomas J. Curtis, International President of the Tunnel & Subway Constructors' Union and manager of the Building Trades Compensation Bureau, presided while a New York representative of the American Federation of Labor, Hugh Frayne, was the principal speaker. From this conference emerged "The Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers," the aim of which was "to reach the great mass of unorganized Negro workers in New York City with the message of trade unionism and eventually to enroll them in the unions of their trade," and the slogan of which was "Union Hours, Union Conditions and Union Wages for the Negro Worker in New York City."<sup>52</sup> The elected officers of the Committee were: <sup>53</sup> Thomas J. Curtis (also 1st Vice-President of the State Federation of Labor), Chairman and Treasurer; Mrs. Gertrude E. McDougal (Negro member of Teachers' Union Local No. 5 and Assistant Principal of Public School No. 89 at that time), Vice-Chairman; Frank R. Crosswaith (Negro Union Organizer and a devoted Socialist), Executive Secretary. In addition to these officers there was an Executive Board whose membership was composed of six white and five Negro unionists, among whom were: <sup>54</sup> Ernest Bohm, Bookkeepers, Steno-

<sup>51</sup> *Preliminary Report, The Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers, June, 1925.* (From files of the Harlem Labor Committee.)

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

graphers & Accountants Union; Joseph Keston, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union; L. Rosenthal, International Laundry Workers' Union; Ed. Brown, Jr., Elevator Operators' Union; Samuel A. Irving, Carpenters' Union and A. August Marquis, Cigarmakers' Union. The last three of these Board members are Negroes.

The initial program of the Committee was financed by The American Fund for Public Service.<sup>55</sup> Although all other expenses incurred in carrying out the work of the Committee were to be paid from contributions from affiliated unions and gifts from friends, the "Fund", realizing that such contributions and gifts were inadequate, agreed to make further donations, and on June 29, 1925 it gave another donation, this time, \$1,935.<sup>56</sup> With this money to back his budget, Frank R. Crosswaith, the Executive Secretary, set out to accomplish the aims of the committee and, on December 31, 1925, issued a report covering the previous six months' period.<sup>57</sup>

Through the courtesy of A. Philip Randolph, Editor of the *Messenger*, headquarters of the committee were established temporarily in the office of the *Messenger Magazine*, which cooperated splendidly in giving the Committee the necessary publicity.<sup>58</sup> About five weeks later, however, the Committee moved into permanent quarters at 2380 Seventh Avenue, in the heart of Harlem. Very soon letters telling of the aims, purposes and programs of the Committee and asking for financial donations were circulated among all the trade and labor unions of Manhattan and Brooklyn, and news items were released to Negro newspapers and magazines as well as

<sup>55</sup> *Report in Full*, covering Activities of The Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers, from June 1, 1925 to December 31, 1925. (Report is in files of Harlem Labor Committee), p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

to large papers and magazines such as the *New York World*, *The New York Evening Journal*, *The New Leader* and *The Home News*.<sup>60</sup> For the Committee this publicity made "its presence felt among the unorganized Negro workers in New York City and in the organized labor movement", to such an extent that Negro workers of all types sought the advice and information offered by the Committee as to how they could join the unions of their trades.<sup>61</sup> The lectures of the Secretary at over 100 meetings of workers, both organized and unorganized, also served very well in further spreading the news of the existence and activities of the Committee, in educating the workers to a realization that the fundamental problems of black and white workers were the same and in soliciting funds to continue the work.<sup>62</sup>

Most of the remaining efforts of the Committee centered around the organization of the motion picture machine operators, the laundry workers and the Pullman porters and in getting Negro workers into the unions of their trades.

The motion picture machine operators: For several years prior to the organization of the Committee the Negro motion picture machine operators of New York City, a total of 12 who worked in about 8 theatres in New York City, Harlem specifically, had made definite attempts to affiliate with Motion Picture Machine Operators' Union Local 306 of the International Alliance of Theatrical and State Employees, "but race prejudice stepped in between them and a union card each time".<sup>63</sup> Despite this handicap, they were persistent in their appeals for membership. In the meantime they had formed a Negro union, the United Association of Colored

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> *Report*, The Trade Union Committee, June 1, 1925 to December 31, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

Motion Picture Operators,<sup>63</sup> which proved to be of little value in bargaining with their employers. Hence, the continued efforts to affiliate with Local 306, a well organized and powerful union. Finally, Local 306 considered talking the matter over seriously with the Negro operators and, granted their request for a joint meeting for that purpose. It should be noted, however, that the main interest of Local 306 was not in organizing the Negro operators. To the contrary, it merely wanted to organize the theatres in which they worked,<sup>64</sup> so that the number of theatres over which it would have jurisdiction would be increased. Notwithstanding this fact the meeting was held, and Local 306 decided to establish an auxiliary body for the colored workers—merely an effort to control the workers by removing the possibility of union opposition by them when Local 306 should attempt to organize the said theatres. This is shown beyond all doubt by the agreement submitted to the Negro operators. It read as follows:

As per our meeting of this date, and as per your request, herewith follow the rules as made by the committee of Local No. 306 and which were read to you and your committee at our joint meeting:

1. The Negro operators admitted to this auxiliary must pay the prevailing initiation fee upon admittance. They must pay the same dues as the white members of this local, as well as any assessments levied by our assembly.
2. The Negro operators shall be entitled to all of the privileges enjoyed under our prevailing Wage Scale and Conditions, excepting as follows: The Negro shall be confined as far as is physically possible to working in the colored belt under the jurisdiction of Local No. 306.

<sup>63</sup> Ira De A. Reid, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions*, New York, 1930, p. 96.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

3. The Negro operators shall be subject to the provisions of our constitution and by-laws with the following exceptions: The Negro Operators will not be permitted to attend the regular meetings of Local No. 306. The President shall appoint a member of Local 306 to represent the Negro operators at our regular meetings, said appointment to be approved by the auxiliary members in Local No. 306 for Negro operators. The member so appointed shall also act as the representative of the local at all caucuses of the Auxiliary and the local which he may call at the discretion of the Executive Board of the Local. He shall act as the representative of the auxiliary members to Local No. 306 for Negro operators in all their grievances.
4. The above rules as set forth are made for an indefinite period. After these rules are in effect for a reasonable length of time upon petition properly made to the local and upon the will of our body, the auxiliary members to Local No. 306 may become full-fledged members to Local No. 306 with the following exceptions: They shall not attend the regular meetings of the Unions.
5. The above rules as laid down are subject to change at any time at the discretion of the Executive Board of Local No. 306, I. A. T. S. E.

Fraternally submitted,

Recording Secretary.<sup>65</sup>

It is clear that the limitations on the Negro members would have been arbitrary and that while Local 306 arranged to cover all meetings of the auxiliary body, it denied the Negro auxiliary members a similar right of sitting in on meetings of Local 306. This proposal was of course rejected by the United Association of Colored Motion Picture Operators.<sup>66</sup> Subsequently, the Committee interceded from time to time. The final outcome was the acceptance of the Negro operators

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>66</sup> Ira DeA. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

into full membership—with no limitations whatsoever.<sup>67</sup> Recent developments in Local 306 will be discussed when individual unions are considered.

The laundry workers: When the Committee undertook the task of organizational work among laundry workers, it entered a field in which workers were "brutally exploited." Of the 30,000 laundry workers of New York City at that time about 20,000 were Negroes, the majority of whom were young women.<sup>68</sup> The conditions under which they worked were shocking. The usual day's work was from 7:30 A. M. to 7:00 P. M., with but one-half to three-quarters of an hour for lunch, and a full six day week; the wages were disgracefully low and utterly inadequate—from eight to ten dollars weekly.<sup>69</sup> It was reported that an enterprising laundry management in Harlem discharged most of the white workers and replaced them with Negro girls because it could get more work out of them. An added incentive to the workers was a weekly Saturday chicken dinner served in a little restaurant in the garret of the factory.<sup>70</sup> To combat these intolerable conditions through organization of these workers the Committee sponsored a "Joint Committee" for Organizing Laundry Workers in Greater New York. Members of this "Joint Committee" were:<sup>71</sup> the International Laundry Workers' Union, Locals 280 and 290; The Women's Trade Union League; and The Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers. Before this "Joint Committee" could make very much progress the sponsoring agency, the Committee, had ceased to function. These

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Report, The Trade Union Committee, June 1, 1925 to December 31, 1925, p. 4.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

efforts were not entirely in vain, however, for the work begun there was carried on in some degree by the International Laundry Workers' Union, Locals 280 and 290 and by the Women's Trade Union League even up to 1928 and 1929.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, little was accomplished.

The Pullman porters:<sup>73</sup> The Committee reported that from the very outset of the extensive effort to organize Pullman porters in New York City, it had been quite active through its Executive Secretary, Frank R. Crosswaith.<sup>74</sup> Although it was not the sponsoring agency, it spent about three of the six months of its existence working on this effort—especially in the absence of the organizer of the porters—A. Philip Randolph.<sup>75</sup> During the early summer of 1925, when the committee was just getting started, A. P. Randolph began organizational work among the Pullman porters, many of whom were dissatisfied with the Employee Representation Plan sponsored by the Pullman Company and used as the medium of contact between the porters and the Pullman Company.<sup>76</sup> The failure of the plan to produce conditions of labor that met with the approval of the porters brought about general dissatisfaction among them. Among the existing conditions of labor were:<sup>77</sup> the low wage—ranging from \$67.00 a month at the beginning of one's employment to \$94.50 after a period of fifteen years of service; long hours of work, 400 per month on the average as

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Miss A. F. Smith, Secretary of the New York Women's Trade Union League, Nov. 23, 1935.

<sup>73</sup> For a complete review of the organization and development of the Pullman Porters' organization, see Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, Ch. XX, pp. 430-460.

<sup>74</sup> *Report*, The Trade Union Committee, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Messenger*, July, 1925, pp. 254-55 and August, 1925, p. 289.

<sup>77</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, pp. 432, 433.



compared with 240 hours per month in other type of rail-roading; the "doubling out" system which did not allow porters to get the proper rest between runs; the refusal of the Pullman Company to give porters conductor's pay when they served in that capacity by running "in charge" of a car. The discontent created by these conditions was crystalized when A. Philip Randolph made a speech before the Porters' Athletic Association.<sup>78</sup> Immediately following this speech W. H. Des Verney, A. L. Totten and Roy Lancaster—two of whom were officials of the Employee Representation Plan—met and discussed with Randolph the possibility of organizing. The result of this conference was a mass meeting in Harlem on August 25, 1925, at which was born the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids,<sup>79</sup> which has since become the most successful attempt at Negro unionism. Because Randolph had previously made himself known through his magazine articles as "a consistent advocate of the cause of labor" and because he had under his control an organ, the *Messenger Magazine*, that could be used to put the troubles of the porters before the public, he was selected to lead the organization through his direction as general organizer.<sup>80</sup> All of this had not been done without arousing the concern of the Pullman Company and its representatives. It is reported that on the morning after the organization of the porters, about fifty men were summoned to the office of the New York District Superintendent and questioned as to their activity at the mass meeting.<sup>81</sup> Further, many of the porters were requested by a supervisory official located at the Pennsylvania Terminal in New York to report to him "personally" anything "which might inter-

<sup>78</sup> *The Pullman Porter*, 1928, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Spero, S. D. and Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 434.

est us", and "your name will not be mentioned."<sup>88</sup> Other efforts were made through the press to either bribe or intimidate the porters; nevertheless, the struggle for recognition by the Pullman Company began. As pointed out above the Committee assisted in this drive by loaning Frank Crosswaith when Randolph went out on organization tours throughout the United States, for although the Brotherhood had its beginning in New York, the movement soon became national in scope.

Although the Committee concentrated its efforts on the large tasks mentioned above, it continuously sent Negroes to the unions of their trades for membership. Included among these unions and the numbers of workers sent to them were: Bricklayers' Union—3; Furriers' Union—1; Italian Dress and Waist Makers' Union, Local 89—1; Bookkeepers', Stenographers' and Accountants' Union—2; Cloth Hat and Cap International Union—1; Common Laborers' Local 75—1; Painters' Union, 261—4; Teamsters' and Truck Drivers' Union 807—1; International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 9—1; Iron Workers' Union—1; Garage Workers' Union—2; Machinists' Union—1. All of these workers were admitted to membership, except the machinist because the International Machinists' Union had a bar against Negro members.<sup>89</sup> When the matter was pushed by the Committee, President Johnson of the International Machinists' Union promised to make "a determined effort" to have the bar removed at the next convention and to admit the Negro machinist at that time. Although the numbers of workers sent to and accepted by the various unions were small, a definite achievement had been made, for most of these unions were accepting Negro members for the first time. In addition to being instrumental in the creation of a more friendly

<sup>88</sup> *Messenger*, December, 1925, p. 395.

<sup>89</sup> *Report*, The Trade Union Committee, p. 5.

attitude on the part of the unions toward Negro workers the Committee was quite successful in developing among Negro workers themselves a union consciousness and a greater desire for unionization. The influence of the committee was not limited to New York alone as is shown by the action of a Negro baker of Newport News, Va., who wrote to the Committee seeking aid and information on joining a union of his trade.<sup>84</sup>

Unfortunately, the work of the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro workers came to an abrupt end. This collapse has been attributed to two main reasons: (1) the Executive Secretary of the Committee discontinued his work so that he could serve as a full-time organizer for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; and (2) unions affiliated with the Committee became negligent in the payment of their contributions towards its support.<sup>85</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that the Committee actually ceased to function, its far-reaching influence continued to be effective and is reflected in the subsequent developments in the labor union movement in New York.

In 1928 another actual count of Negroes in labor unions and another effort to determine the relationship of black and white union workers was made.<sup>86</sup> In this case the unions studied were limited to those affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, either directly through a federal local or indirectly through a national or international union. There was no investigation of unions that excluded Negroes by constitutional bar or ritualistic procedure included in this study. Table XIII gives a compendium of the findings.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Ira DeA. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> John T. Dole, *The Labor Problem in New York as Affecting Negroes with an Analysis of Union Organization*, Columbia University Master's Essay, 1928.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-50.

TABLE XIII

EXTENT OF MEMBERSHIP AND ATTITUDE OF WHITE MEMBERS TOWARD NEGRO MEMBERS IN THE LABOR UNIONS OF NEW YORK CITY, 1928

Name of Union	Total Membership	Negro Membership	Attitude Toward Negro Workers
<i>Transportation and Communication.</i>			
Railway Express Employees, Local #808 .....	2,000		Favorable
Cleaning Dye House Drivers' Union, Local #17798 .....	200	200	
International Longshoremen's Association, Brooklyn, #968 .....	1,200	1,000	
<i>Clothing and Textile Industries</i> ....			
Cloth Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union..	*		
Shirtmakers' Union, Local #23..	1,700	13	Not stated
Waterproof Garment Workers' Union, Local #20 .....	700	2	Indifferent
The Bonnaz Embroiderers' Union.	1,200	8	"
Costume Dressmakers' Union #38	*	40	Amicable
Dressmakers' Union of Greater New York .....	12,000	600	"
Shirt and Boys' Waist Workers' Union .....	6,500	38	"
International Tuckers, Hemstitchers, Pleaters and Novelty Workers .....	*	9	"
Joint Board of Furriers' Union, Locals 1, 5, 10 and 15 International Fur Workers' Union of Greater New York .....	2,000	10	Favorable
United Neckwear Cutters, #6939.	250	none	Indifferent
Waist League .....	*	†	Not stated
Children's Dress, Bath Robes and House Dressmakers' Union ...	3,000	30	"
Millinery Workers' Union #24..	4,500	300	"
Embroidery Workers' Union #6.	800	2	"
International United Garment Workers of America .....	*	8	"
<i>Paper Manufacturing, Printing and Publishing</i> .....			
New York Press Assistants' Union #23 .....	2,600	8	Indifferent
Amalgamated Lithographers of America, Local #1 .....	2,101	1	Favorable
Bookbinders' Local Union #25, I. B. of B. ....	*		"
New York Printing Pressmen's			

TABLE XIII—Continued

Name of Union	Total Membership	Negro Membership	Attitude Toward Negro Workers
Union #51 .....	3,200	6	"
Examiners, Readers and Publishers' Union, Local #82 .....	500	3	"
Typographical Union #61 .....	9,800	100	"
<i>Food, Liquor and Tobacco Industries</i>	3,016	116	
Brewers' Union #1 .....	*	†	"
Joint Advisory Board, Cigar Makers' International Union .....	3,000	100	Amicable
Waiters' Union #11 .....	16	16	
<i>Public Service</i> .....	4,700	60	
Teachers' Union of New York City, Local #5 .....	700	10	"
Federal Employees #4 .....	4,000	50	"
<i>Metal and Machinery Industries</i> ...	1,200	60	
United Automobile Artercraft and Vehicle Workers Local # 49..	1,200	50	Favorable
Stationary and Operating Engineers #228 .....	*	10	Not stated
<i>Building Trades</i> .....	4,015	29	
Bricklayers' Union #9 .....	1,515	10	Not stated
Architectural Iron, Bronze and Structural Workers' Union ....	*		Friendly
United Cement Masons' Union 132	900	9	Favorable
Compressed Air and Foundation Workers' Union .....		35%	Not stated
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local 366 .....	*		
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, #2090 .....	1,600	10	Unfavorable
<i>Leather Industries</i> .....	700	6	
Suitcase, Bag and Portfolio Makers' Union .....	700	6	
<i>Amusements and Professions</i> .....	600	4	
New York Song Writers .....	600	4	Amicable
American Artists' Federation ....	*	†	Doubtful
<i>Salesmen and Clerks</i> .....	700		
Retail Grocery and Dairy Clerks' Union of Greater New York ..	700		Indifferent
Delicatessen Clerks' Union .....	*		Favorable
<i>Personal Service</i>			
Journeymen, Barbers' International Union of America ....	*	†	Not stated

TABLE XIII—Concluded

Name of Union	Total Membership	Negro Membership	Attitude Toward Negro Workers
<i>Miscellaneous</i> .....	2,250	55	
New York Wood Carvers .....	350		Indifferent
Glass Bevelers and Mirror Workers #528 .....	*	†	
Upholsterers' Union, Local 76 ...	1,000	4	
Amalgamated Silver Workers' Union, Local #30 .....	*		Favorable
American Brotherhood of Blacksmiths .....	*		Not stated
B. S. and A. U., #12646 .....	900	1	Amicable
Women's Trade Union .....	*	†	Not stated
International Jewelry Workers, #1 .....	*	50	Fraternal
Total .....	71,432	2,700	

\* Figures not given.

† No Negro Members.

In classifying these unions categories that are later used for grouping the post-N.R.A. unions were used here for purposes of future comparison. Figures collected by Miss Ovington, as given above, are not grouped; nor are the names of the individual unions given. Further, the figures for the total membership in the various unions were not secured in Miss Ovington's count; therefore, the two sets of figures are not altogether comparable. At any rate, it can at least be observed that the number of Negro union members increased since the 1906 and 1910 countings of 1,385 and 1,358, respectively, to 2,700 in 1928. These three samples show that the number just about doubled. Over 2,000 of these union members in 1928, however, are in occupations not even mentioned by Miss Ovington's count, viz., 1,000 in the Longshoremen's Unions, 600 in the Dressmakers' Unions, 300 in the Millinery Workers' Unions, 200 in the Cleaning, Dye House Drivers' Union and 100 in the Typographical Workers' Union, the latter two probably being included in Miss

Ovington's groups of "Teamsters" and "Pressmen" and "Printers". On the other hand, Dole's figures for the unions of the building trades are surprisingly small as compared with Miss Ovington's, i. e., 10 bricklayers in 1928 as over against 21 in 1910 and 90 in 1906, and 10 carpenters in 1928 as over against 40 in 1910 and 60 in 1906. Is it that the number of organized Negro workers in these skilled trades is greatly decreasing or that Dole's figures are not as complete as were Miss Ovington's? Very likely the latter possibility is a more correct explanation as Dole's figures are specifically limited to American Federation of Labor unions in the first place and to merely a sample of them in the second place. As stated above no comparison of these figures can be scientifically justified; merely observations can be made. However, since Dole secured the total membership figures it is interesting to note the fact that, judging from his sample, the proportion of Negro workers to that of all workers unionized in American Federation of Labor unions is much less than is the proportion of gainfully occupied Negroes to all gainfully occupied workers. According to the 1930 Census occupational returns gainfully occupied Negroes formed 14.1 per cent of all gainfully occupied workers—shown by Table V in Chapter I. This figure is probably not so different from the 1928 figure and is close enough for this rough comparison. Similarly, Dole's figures show that 3.8 per cent of all union members of his sample were Negroes. This leaves no doubt that on the whole Negro workers were far less organized than others and that they, therefore, offered a very fertile field for union organizational activity.

From this time to the beginning of the National Industrial Recovery Act in the summer of 1933—when union activity was revived by the famous Section 7A of the Act—little was done along the lines of organizing Negro workers, except

in the clothing industries. A strike in 1929 disclosed that in 3,500 dress shops of New York there were employed 4,000 Negro women of whom but approximately 200 were members of various locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.<sup>88</sup> Upon finding this situation the union employed a Negro organizer and started an extensive organization plan among these Negro workers. Many difficulties were encountered in attempting to organize these workers as they were used mainly in the unskilled crafts of the trade—pressers, finishers and cleaners. Describing some of these obstacles, Ira DeA. Reid sums up the problem as given to him by a union executive:

. . . that (1) colored workers are not inclined to train for the advanced lines, they are content in following the less skilled occupations; (2) these Negro workers shift to domestic work when facing unemployment; (3) white workers take domestic employment as a last resort and stick to the trade for advancement; (4) the colored girl is unsteady, lacks appreciation of trade lines; (5) Negroes are not informed on trade unionism and employers take advantage of this fact to make colored workers feel their incompetency. When strikes are called the Negro is not interested because of his failure to understand trade union principles.<sup>89</sup>

To minimize the adverse effects of these problems the union set up a special department to carry out its plan "to organize all colored workers employed in the dress industry." According to the Negro organizer, Flora Pinckney, the prospects for success were very good, and with the aid of "colored organizations and individuals who are in sympathy with the 'American organized labor movement'" the effort was almost certain to add 600 new Negro members by April, 1930.<sup>90</sup> A great degree of success was attained.

<sup>88</sup> Ira DeA. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.



Thus, in this short period from the beginning of the World War in Europe in 1914 to the beginning of the N.R.A. period in the United States, Negro labor underwent some significant experiences. In the first place, the War time industrial boom opened the way for Negro labor to participate as an important labor factor in production. As a result of this opportunity, which made possible greater economic advantages for Negroes in Northern industrial centers, unprecedented waves of Negro migration, particularly in the boom periods, 1916-1919 and 1921-1923, followed. These great influxes of Negro workers intensified the old and created new problems of adjustment and integration of these newcomers into the labor movements of the centers. Like other great Northern industrial centers New York City had to cope with this situation. Here the efforts took about four forms: (1) agitation for the acceptance of Negro workers into the organized labor movement on an equal footing with other workers, represented mainly by the "economic radicals" of the post-War period; (2) fact-finding efforts to get true pictures of existing conditions to serve as a basis for planned action for their improvement, represented by such studies as the "New Day for the Colored Woman Worker", the "Preliminary Survey of Industrial Distribution and Union Status of Negroes in New York City" and "The Labor Problem in New York as Affecting Negroes with an Analysis of Union Organization"—all of which have been discussed above; (3) individual labor union action, efforts of individual unions to bring Negro workers in industries under their jurisdiction into their unions and efforts at independent Negro unionism; and (4) collective labor union action, attempts of groups of labor unions to create a central agency to encourage and train Negro workers for participation in the organized labor movement through the unions of their respective trades and, on the other hand, to induce unions bar-

ring Negro workers in some way or other to let down such bars, represented chiefly by "The Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers." Through these means, all four of which at times functioned simultaneously, the Negro workers of New York City were gradually attempting the attainment of their place along with other workers in the organized labor movement of that period.

## **PART II**

### **THE N.B.A. AND POST-N.B.A. SITUATIONS**

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NEGRO AND UNION ACTIVITIES DURING THE N.R.A. PERIOD

THE paradoxical hypothesis that Negro labor suffered most under N.R.A. and that, during the same period, the organization of Negro workers in New York City made its greatest strides and began its most successful movements is the point of departure for the discussion in this chapter. The former situation was just another manifestation of a condition which has always prevailed in the American labor movement, while the latter was an incidental by-product of a movement for the organization of all workers—a movement which itself made little progress. While no effort is put forth here to make an exhaustive critical analysis of the National Industrial Recovery Act and the work and accomplishments of the National Recovery Administration, it will be necessary to consider briefly the origin and purpose of both, so that this discussion of the activities of labor in general and of Negro labor in particular under their regulation and supervision will be better understood.

The crash of the stock market in 1929 marked the beginning of a long period of depression which brought forth the attempt at national economic planning generally called the N.R.A. As time passed, between 1929 and 1933, competition became extremely keen between individuals and organizations, resulting in unreasonable wage reductions, price cutting and, in many cases, a lowering of the quality of the products produced. On the whole, industrial standards were being abandoned, and organized labor was losing practically all the advantages of increased wages, shorter hours, better

conditions of employment and others which it had struggled so hard to accomplish in previous years. Realizing these conditions, the Roosevelt Administration began very soon after its inauguration to have enacted legislation that would assist in coping with these conditions. The fruit of these efforts was the National Industrial Recovery Act, approved by President Roosevelt on June 16, 1933. Under Title I, section I of the Act, giving the "Declaration of Policy", is the description of the situation and the aims that the legislation was designed to accomplish:

A national emergency productive of widespread unemployment and disorganization of industry, which burdens interstate and foreign commerce, affects the public welfare, and undermines the standards of living of the American people, is hereby declared to exist. It is hereby declared to be the policy of Congress to remove obstructions to the free flow of interstate and foreign commerce which tend to diminish the amount thereof; and to provide for the general welfare by promoting the organization of industry for the purpose of cooperative action among trade groups, to induce and maintain united action of labor and management under adequate governmental sanctions and supervision, to eliminate unfair competitive practices, to promote the fullest possible utilization of the present productive capacity of industries, to avoid undue restriction of production (except as may be temporarily required), to increase the consumption of industrial and agricultural products by increasing purchasing power, to reduce and relieve unemployment, to improve standards of labor, and otherwise to rehabilitate industry and to conserve natural resources.

This was the expression of the aims and purposes of a two-year scheme of economic planning through the self-government of industry and management of labor with, however, Government guidance and supervision—an effort to create higher wages, shorter hours and greater opportunity for re-employment of those out of work and security for those

fortunate enough to be employed. It was, indeed, very much like some of the aims of trade unionism!

In order to carry out effectively its purpose as outlined above, the Act itself provided for an administrative body. President Roosevelt thereupon set up the "National Recovery Administration", NRA, which, acting in this capacity, encouraged industries to work out their own "codes of fair competition",<sup>1</sup> to formulate their thoughts on what the public interest required and, in practice, to set up self government. No two of the codes of fair competition were exactly alike; however, all of them were required to include in their provisions, among other things, recognition of certain rights of labor as given in section 7A of the Act and the statement to the effect that "the President may from time to time cancel or modify any order, approval, license, rule, or regulation" under title I of the Act.<sup>2</sup> From the point of view of the organized labor movement very important was the provision, at least in the early life of NRA, set forth in section 7(a), for under NRA the organization of the greatest enemies of trade-union organization, employers—capitalists, into trade associations had become virtually compulsory and, consequently, practically universal. Section 7(a), quoted below, was designed to assure the workers a similar opportunity for organization so that they could deal collectively in a more effective manner with the employers or employer associations. It read:

Every code of fair competition, agreement, and license approved, prescribed or issued under this title shall contain the following conditions; (1) that employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference,

<sup>1</sup> For complete information on the making and provision of codes see Bulletin No. 2, entitled *Basic Codes of Fair Competition*, issued by the National Recovery Administration in 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

restraint or coercion of employers of labor, or their agents, in the designation of such representatives or self-organization or in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection; (2) that no employee and no one seeking employment shall be required as a condition of employment to join any company union or to refrain from joining, organizing, or assisting a labor organization of his own choosing; and (3) that employers shall comply with the maximum hours of labor, minimum rates of pay, and other conditions of employment, approved or prescribed by the President.

When this section of the Act became law along with the rest of the N.I.R.A., there arose great confidence in labor leaders that the economic crisis of the period would come to an early end and that organized labor would make much headway under the protection that section 7 (a) offered. The masses of unorganized and unskilled workers, too, looked forward with great expectation to the realization of their long hopes of salvation. In fact, practically all workers and leaders of workers hailed enthusiastically the whole NRA as the "great charter of labor". But, to the disappointment of these people Section 7(a) did not accomplish what it was supposedly set up for as is clearly shown by the report of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor. In part it read:

Looking back over the short history of Section 7(a), we are instantly confronted with the realization that this alleged protection was never enforceable so that the benefits derived were accomplished for the most part by those who proceeded in reliance in the section and who consolidated their gains, despite the fact that enforcement could not be achieved. A further point in this connection, however, is the increased recognition by both management and workers that collective bargaining must become a part of our economic system.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Report of the *Proceedings* of the Fifty-Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1935, p. 41.

Somewhat unlike the situation in the country as a whole the trade union movement in New York City made considerable progress—especially among Negro workers who were, up to that time, only slightly organized. The militancy of the workers, their new self-confidence and their willingness to fight—all at least inspired by Section 7 (a)—come together as powerful forces which caused a movement toward unionization and organization and produced a wave of labor struggles and strikes. Well established unions sponsored new and intensive organizational drives for new members, national and international unions set up new locals and many new local unions were organized. Of approximately three hundred unions contacted by this writer immediately after the expiration of the National Industrial Recovery Act in June, 1935 practically all that were organized prior to the advent of NRA stated that during the NRA period they appointed organizational committees and sponsored special programs, while about fifty-three, which were organized subsequent to the advent of NRA in June, 1933, declared that it was through the early inspiration and protection offered by section 7(a) that they were able to get a start. Of very great significance in the whole movement was the new position of the Negro workers, brought about mainly by two causes, (1) the more friendly attitude of white workers toward the acceptance of Negro workers into their unions, and (2) the new attitude of Negro workers themselves toward taking the risk involved in the first steps of the unionization of workers. In the first instance, a great number of unions, seeking to build up their membership while the time was ripe for organization of new members and seeking also to control all workers in the industries they covered, accepted all workers employed in the "shops" that they organized. In many cases Negroes formed quite a proportion of such workers. There was apparently a slight shift



from race consciousness to class consciousness; the solidarity of laborers as a class was the important issue, it seemed. In the second instance, one of the most formidable obstacles in the way of organizing Negro workers was at least temporarily off set. The fear felt by the Negro workers of losing their jobs because of union activity has always been a serious handicap in organizing them—whether by unions favorable toward them or by independent Negro organizations. Of course, this fear was a natural thing, for most of the Negro workers found themselves in the ranks of the unskilled and could therefore be most easily replaced by other unskilled workers should their employers dismiss them. It seems, however, that they, too, realized the advantages and protection that section 7(a) had to offer and, feeling that this new legislation would protect them during the early organizational stages, they responded most willingly to the calls of the unions for the organization of all workers. This was particularly true of the garment industry here in New York City. Although it will be amply illustrated in the following chapters when each union is discussed, the example offered by the activities of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union during this period is pertinent at this point, for it illustrates both of the above instances.

Before the summer of 1933 Negroes formed a very small part of the organized workers in the dress shops of New York City. Of the 20,000 union members about 600 were Negroes although there were about 90,000 dress shops workers, of whom about 5,000 were Negroes, available for unionization.<sup>4</sup> On the whole, however, Negro workers were considered unfertile organizable material, for they had continuously ignored the invitation to join extended by some of the unions. This refusal was the result of the existing racial

<sup>4</sup> Edith Kine, "The Garment Union Comes to the Negro Workers," *Opportunity*, April, 1934, p. 107.

antagonism on the one hand and of a fear of losing jobs acquired through a hard struggle on the other hand. The difficulties of racial discrimination met by these workers—mainly women—when they tried to gain employment in the needle trade and the memory of the fact that those who did get in did so only through an accidental situation—the World War labor shortage as described above—were still fresh in the minds of these workers; consequently, although they were most exploited in the matter of long hours, low wages and extremely unhealthful working conditions, they remained reluctant about affiliating with the very agencies that had theretofore appeared to be their arch enemies. But an even greater obstacle to their organization was that fear of losing their job. Once this was overcome, the workers were willing to strive for the improvement of working conditions through union activity. Perhaps, NRA was one of the greatest factors in helping to accomplish that result. Commenting further on this point, Miss Kine stated:

The walkout of the Negro women dressmakers on August 16, 1933, together with the white workers, in one fell swoop upturned these glaring inequalities (of working conditions among Negro workers and among white workers). Nearly 4,000 joined Local 22 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union during that memorable week, a phenomenal jump from 600 Negroes who had been members until that time. And Section 7a of the Recovery Act, giving the right to all employees to deal collectively with employers through representatives of their own choosing, made Negroes confident that they were not jeopardizing their jobs by fighting for better working conditions and a living wage.<sup>8</sup>

Not only Local 22 but also other locals of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union brought in large numbers of new Negro members: The Dress Pressers' Union Local

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

60 accepted about 550, Local 62 about 1,000, Local 91 about 900 and Local 66 about 100.<sup>6</sup> These locals represent practically all the crafts—pressers, operators, stitchers, examiners, cleaners, etc.—of the ladies' garment industry. To be sure, as Miss Kine pointed out, the spontaneous response of these Negro women garment workers to the strike call of the union proved a very great boon to them because they enjoyed as a result of their cooperation a wage almost double that previously earned, an astoundingly shortened work week and, for the first time, "a feeling of genuine economic equality with the white women workers," all of which is borne out by the fact that since the strike Negro women have been selected as shop "chairladies" in shops having a large majority of white workers.<sup>7</sup> Such situations were unheard of before the strike; the new attitude of workers was created by NRA. It should be emphasized again that although great strides such as these toward the organization of Negro workers into mixed locals, on the same footing as white workers, were not made by all unions, yet this movement in the garment industry is characteristic of the new understanding between white and black workers. The progress made by various unions differed in degree rather than in kind.

It is well to note in passing that NRA, on the other hand, worked several incidental hardships on Negro workers in New York City as elsewhere. Most important of these was the displacement of Negro workers in some cases by white workers and the continued exploitation of Negro workers by forced, secret agreement between them and their employers. In the former case, Negroes were discharged when employers found that they (employers) had to pay certain minimum wages which were usually far in excess of those paid such Negro workers. These employers felt that if they

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

had to pay these wages in compliance with the NRA codes, they might as well give the jobs—which had then gained status under the new wages—to white men. Added to this position taken by some employers was the pressure of many white workers who were willing to accept jobs that had then become desirable.<sup>8</sup> The case of the secret agreements is typified by the situation in a Bronx bed-spring factory which employed about 200 Negroes from Harlem. Here the employers required all workers—under threat of being fired if they complained or made public remarks—to report for work at seven o'clock in the morning and to sign the time sheet at seven thirty o'clock, the time set by the code. In the afternoon, the workers signed out at four o'clock and went back to work until five o'clock.<sup>9</sup> Scarcity of work forced these men to accept these conditions without a kick. In the meantime, however, Local 140B of the Upholsterer's, Carpet and Linoleum Mechanic's International Union of America, which covered the metal bed and spring workers, had sent out organizers to attempt the unionization of these workers so that those conditions could be effectively fought. At the time of this writing these efforts were making little headway.

But, on the whole, the gains accruing to the Negro working group under the N.R.A., especially those organized into unions, counter-balanced the incidental hardships thereby allowing for decided improvement in conditions among the Negro workers.

During this period there also occurred three other interesting and significant developments that were closely related to the growing efforts to organize Negro workers into labor

<sup>8</sup> The writer arrived at these conclusions after interviewing many persons who were discharged after the beginning of N.R.A.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Robert Robinson, Negro Executive Board member, Local 140B of the Upholsterer's, Carpet and Linoleum Mechanic's International Union of America, August 29, 1935.

organizations of all types. These were represented by the Citizens' League for Fair Play, the Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance, and the Harlem Labor Committee with its successor, the Negro Labor Committee.

*The Citizens' League for Fair Play:*<sup>30</sup> The Citizens' League for Fair Play, composed of a number of individual citizens and Negro organizations such as churches, social clubs, political clubs, newspapers, etc.—the African Patriotic League being one of such organizations—located mainly in the Harlem section of Manhattan, was established for “the economic betterment of Negroes in general”. The League sought to realize this purpose in one direction by picketing stores that operated in the Negro community and that did not hire Negro workers in certain capacities—in picketing to induce employment of a certain percentage of Negro workers. Prior to September 10, 1934, the League set up a committee, which it named the picket committee of the Citizens' League for Fair Play, whose function it was to establish contact with employers in this section, to ask them to employ a given percentage of Negro workers and to picket the premises of the employer if he failed to comply with the request. Later the League claimed to have severed its relationship with the picket committee; however, ignoring this split, the committee approached the Manager of the A. S. Beck Shoe Store on 125th Street in the Harlem business center and demanded that he employ fifty percent Negro workers, as clerks and other workers, either from the mem-

<sup>30</sup> The information about this organization and its activities herein described was obtained from the “Memorandum in Support of Motion” by the plaintiff, the “Defendant's Memorandum” by the defendant and the decision of the court given in the *New York Law Journal*—November 1, 1934, p. 1573, of the Case “A. S. Beck Shoe Corporation, Plaintiff v. John Johnson, as President of the Citizen's League for Fair Play, et al.,” before the Supreme Court, New York County and from interviews with the attorneys and several members of both of said organizations. Observations of the writer were also helpful.

bership of the League or from a list selected by the League. When the Manager refused this demand, the committee placed before the store pickets carrying signs with such statements as: "An Appeal. Why spend your money where you can't work? This is foolish. Stay out. Citizens' League for Fair Play"; "A. S. Beck does not employ 50 percent Negroes. Stay out. Do not buy here" and "An Appeal. Don't buy in this store. Negro serving here is a porter not a clerk. Stay out. Citizens' League for Fair Play". It is reported that on October 3, 1934 one of the pickets collided with a prospective customer of the store and thereby caused a disturbance before the store. Subsequently, this picket and his fellow worker were arrested, charged with disorderly conduct, tried before Magistrate Burke, convicted of the charge and sentenced to three months' probation. About one week later the committee circulated handbills and called a mass meeting in protest against the arrest and conviction of the two pickets. It also changed its picket signs to read:

"AN APPEAL  
A. S. BECK  
THIS STORE INSULTS NEGROES  
USES 75% NEGRO MONEY  
DOES NOT EMPLOY 75% NEGRO HELP  
DONT BUY HERE"

Thereupon, the A. S. Beck Shoe Corporation brought a complaint against John Johnson, as President of the Citizens' League for Fair Play, the African Patriotic League and others. In the process of the case the attorneys for the plaintiff moved that an injunction, *pendente lite*, be issued, restraining the defendants from picketing in front of or near any of the stores of the plaintiff and from boycotting its business. In support of this motion the following points were offered:

1. They are not a labor union.
2. There is no labor dispute involved.
3. They have violated the provisions of Section 580 of the Penal Law and have conspired to commit an act injurious to trade and commerce and particularly to injure the property of the plaintiff.
4. Their acts are contrary to the public policy of the State of New York in that they tend to incite race riots, to instill race prejudices, to foster racial strife and to foment racial dispute.
5. Their picketing and boycotting is unlawful.
6. Even if they had the right to picket and boycott they have forfeited such right by resorting to violence, threats, intimidation and false representation in that—
  - (a) They have resorted to violence by assaulting customers of the plaintiff.
  - (b) They have threatened and intimidated customers of the plaintiff.
  - (c) They have disturbed the peace by causing crowds to collect in front of the premises of the plaintiff.
  - (d) They have displayed false and defamatory placards charging the plaintiff with being unfair to Negroes, with insulting Negroes and refusing to permit Negroes to work where they spend their money.
  - (f) They have distributed handbills containing false and defamatory statements that the plaintiff resorted to intimidation and that the plaintiff procured false testimony in the prosecution of two of the defendants upon charges of disorderly conduct by the use of the words the plaintiff has "framed our boys".
  - (g) Their picketing and boycotting continues to be unlawful in that their picket signs still contain the false and defamatory statement that the plaintiff "insults Negroes."
7. They have arbitrarily and unreasonably demanded that the plaintiff discharge its white employees and fill their places with Negroes from their own members or by Negroes selected by them.

8. They have been repudiated by the Negro press.<sup>11</sup>

In answer to the allegations of the Plaintiff the defendants centered their main argument on the fact that "The Right of Peaceful Picketing for a Lawful Purpose in Labor Controversies is Recognized by the Courts".<sup>12</sup> Further, they claimed that when circumstances indicate beyond a doubt that the crux of the issue before the court is one of capital against labor—employer against labor—or is one of opening of economic channels by workers in the field of industry, the trend of existing legislation and of the court rulings has been in the direction of granting labor ample opportunity to obtain its demands, provided, of course, the means and methods used are free from intimidation and misrepresentation. And this was, according to the defendants, the case in that situation.

The motion was argued in the New York County Supreme Court before Justice Rosenman, who concluded his opinion on the case as follows:

The controversy here is not a labor dispute. The defendants do not constitute a labor union or a labor organization of any kind. They do not compose, nor are they all members of any single trade or class of trades. Their demands are not connected with any one industry. The questions about which they are now picketing have no connection with wages, hours of labor, unionization or betterment of working conditions.

It is solely a racial dispute. It is born of an understandable desire on the part of some of the Negroes in this community that the stores in their neighborhood where they spend their money should employ a percentage of Negro help. Their exclusive concern is that a certain number of white persons be discharged in order to make a place for members of their own race.

<sup>11</sup> "Memorandum in Support of Motion", *op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

<sup>12</sup> "Defendant's Memorandum," *op. cit.*, p. 3.



In the present case no claim is made that any interests of organized labor are involved. It is purely a dispute as to one race opposed to another. The acts here shown are also contrary to a sound public policy. If they were permitted and if they succeeded in their purpose, it would then become equally proper for some organization composed of white persons to picket the premises, insisting that all Negro employees be discharged and that white employees be re-employed. If they were permitted, there is substantial danger that a race riot and race reprisals might result in this and other communities. They would serve as a precedent for similar activity in the interest of various racial or religious groups. The effect on the social well being of communities throughout the state would be far reaching . . .

The motion for preliminary injunction is granted, settle order.<sup>18</sup>

Obviously, the picket committee, whether it was still affiliated with the Citizens' League for Fair Play or not, was neither primarily a labor union nor even a semblance of one, for in fact it was not a combination of workmen of the same trade or of several allied trades, for the purpose of securing by united action the most favorable conditions as regard wages, hours of labor, etc. for its members; nevertheless, the movement was quite significant as it at least showed that the Negro workers, being newly made organization conscious by the blare of NRA trumpets, were realizing more and more the necessity for organization as an indispensable aid in dealing with matters related to the gaining, improving conditions of and holding of employment. Further, it was the forerunner of special organization programs, sponsored by several locals of the Retail Clerks' International Protective Association, a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, to bring Negro clerks of the stores in the 125th street business section of Harlem into

<sup>18</sup> *New York Law Journal*, November 1, 1934, p. 1573.

their membership and to encourage other Negro recruits to join.<sup>14</sup>

*The Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance.*<sup>15</sup> In the meantime, there developed another movement somewhat similar to that of the picket committee. Late in the summer of 1933 there began renewed street corner "soapbox" and "ladder" agitation and propaganda talks in the Harlem area of Manhattan by people who represented themselves as speakers for various benevolent, mutual aid, welfare, political and other organizations—all of which had at heart, supposedly, the social and economic well-being of the people of Harlem and of the community as a whole.

Prominent among these agitators was Sufi Abdul Hamid, who claimed to be of Sudanese birth and who spoke usually in the area between 125th Street and 138th Street on 7th Avenue.<sup>16</sup> The topics of most of these talks centered around the horrid economic and social conditions in the Harlem area—the poor housing with high rentals, the lack of employment opportunities in the very business in Harlem, particularly on 125th Street, where Negroes spent most of their money, the need for the banding together of Negroes to fight for greater political and economic opportunities, etc. Very often, the meetings developed into a stirring up of racial misunderstandings because it was often pointed out that the people who controlled these conditions—the landlords, the employers, the business men and others—were white, mainly Jews, while the "victims" were all Negroes. Because this situation developed into the semblance of a fight against

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter VI on Experiences of Local Unions, *infra*.

<sup>15</sup> Information for this section is drawn mainly from the briefs, affidavits and other materials submitted in the case of "Manhattan Lerner Company, Inc. v. Sufi Abdul Hamid, as president of the Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance, et al." and from interviews with individuals concerned.

<sup>16</sup> Out of curiosity the writer often listened to these speeches.

Jews, Hamid styled himself the "Black Hitler" and sometimes exhorted and harangued the crowds of listeners to drive the Jews and other whites out of Harlem through economic boycott of their businesses.<sup>17</sup> But, to the sound thinking people of the community Hamid was a menace to the public safety and to interracial harmony. To Fred R. Moore, editor and publisher of the *New York Age*, a well established Negro Newspaper, he was a racketeer, one who made "schemes for his own personal financial gain and in order to acquire for himself a following which would look to and follow his leadership".<sup>18</sup> Such a scheme was the Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance. To the contrary, Hamid himself alleged "that the Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance is an association with offices, a membership of hundreds and governing by-laws: the purpose of it is to, by lawful means, obtain better working conditions for its members, shorter working hours, higher pay and in general to improve the economic conditions of Negroes. . . ."<sup>19</sup> To accomplish this purpose of the organization picketing of stores unfair to labor and unfavorable toward the organization of their employees for the improvement of their working conditions was resorted to. Through this employers were more or less forced to hire its members if the employees of said employers refused to join because of fear of losing their jobs.

Cognizant of the recent injunction granted to restrain picketing before the premises of the A. S. Beck Shoe Store—described above—Hamid attempted to establish a legal basis for picketing; he therefore organized another associa-

<sup>17</sup> "Manhattan Lerner Company, Inc. v. Sufi Abdul Hamid, etc., et al., etc." Affidavit of Fred R. Moore, June 5, 1935.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> "Manhattan Lerner Company Inc. v. Sufi Abdul Hamid, etc., et al., etc.," Affidavit of Sufi Abdul Hamid, June 7, 1935.

tion, named the Afro-American Federation of Labor. Later in an effort to incorporate the association he drew up a Certificate of Incorporation, in which the objects of the corporations were outlined as follows:

- (a) To promote the principles of friendship, fraternity, and good fellowship among working men and working women including persons of African descent.
- (b) To associate ourselves into an organization for the purpose of securing higher wages and shorter hours; for the arbitration of labor disputes; to secure better working conditions for working men and working women; with emphasis upon those persons who by the present social and economic conditions are denied free and unhindered intercourse with others; without regard to race or creed or branch of trade of those persons in the trades, arts, crafts, skilled and semi-skilled labor, by collective bargaining and other lawful means.
- (c) To peaceably and by lawful suasion organize workers as members so that subdivision (b) herein may be attained, dividing and or subdividing the members into groups or locals granting powers thereto, subject, and not contrary to this Certificate of Incorporation in furtherance of the corporate purpose herein.
- (d) To voluntarily aid needy members.
- (e) To rent, lease, or own or otherwise acquire and operate club rooms, sleeping, eating and meeting places for its members.
- (f) To edit and distribute literature in conformance with the above stated principles so as to enlighten and inform members and others of the principles of the organization in furtherance of the corporate objects.<sup>20</sup>

The statement of these objectives shows that Hamid did not intend to limit the activities of the organization to those

<sup>20</sup> Certificate of Incorporation of Afro-American Federation of Labor-proposed to the Department of Labor, State of New York.

of a labor union, as sections (b) and (c) allowed for the affiliation of auxiliary bodies which might be labor unions. While the application for this Certificate of Incorporation was still awaiting a hearing before the Industrial Board of the Department of Labor of the State of New York, Hamid made the Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance an affiliate of the Afro-American Federation of Labor and continued its activities in the 125th Street Business section.

Representatives of the Alliance continued to call on Negro employees in these stores and request them to join the "union," promising them that the Alliance would get for them an increased wage and better hours of work. When they refused to comply peaceably with the request of these agents, there usually followed threats of violence, of physical harm and of loss of employment unless these employees agreed to join.<sup>21</sup> Through this means the Alliance recruited some members from among the few Negro clerks working in the area. In other cases, when difficulties were encountered by the Alliance—either with employers or employees—pickets protesting that those employers were unfair to union labor were put into action before the places of business. Then, usually, in order to save the business from the effects of a boycott, the employers allowed the workers to join or increased the wages and shortened the hours to meet the demands of the Alliance. Thus, although the workers were apparently forced into the "union", they did enjoy wage increases in spite of the fact that they had to pay a joining fee of five dollars and dues of twenty five cents a week.<sup>22</sup> A temporary cessation of this activity came about after the so-called Harlem "race riot" of March 19, 1935. Although

<sup>21</sup> "Manhattan Lerner Company, Inc. v. Sufi Abdul Hamid, etc., et al., etc.," Affidavits of Katherine Harris—June 1, 1935, Marion Noyes—June 1, 1935, Toby Grizelman—June 1, 1935, Gwendolyn Rae—June 1, 1935.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

some have asserted that this agitation, added to the specific cause of the disturbance—the stealing of a knife by a Negro boy in the S. H. Kress store in 125th Street and several unrelated happenings as outlined by the Report of the Subcommittee of the Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem which investigated the disturbance of March 19th, 1935, caused the disturbance to grow to the proportions it did, the Committee herein named stated, among other things, that:

the outburst was spontaneous and unpremeditated; . . . that this sudden breach of the public order was the result of a highly emotional situation among the colored people of Harlem due in large part to the nervous strain of years of unemployment and insecurity. To this must be added their deep sense of wrong through discrimination against their employment in stores which live chiefly upon their purchases, . . . <sup>20</sup>

However illegitimate or racketeering Hamid's organization may have been, it was at least striking at these very frightful conditions in its attempt to get employment for Negroes and to improve working conditions for those already employed.

Despite adverse criticism the Alliance resumed its activities only to be finally stopped by an injunction against picketing. It appears that agents of the Alliance approached the Negro salesgirl at the Lerner Shop in 125th Street and invited her to join, making their usual promise of getting for her an increased wage. When she refused to consider the proposition and when the manager of the shop refused to make an agreement with the Alliance to employ its members, it began picketing the shop on May 31, 1935, using signs which read:

<sup>20</sup> "Report of the Subcommittee which Investigated the Disturbance of March 19th," Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, New York, 1935, p. 1.

## AN APPEAL

To pass on                      Do not  
 Patronize this store.  
 They refuse to employ  
 UNION LABOR  
 Members of the Negro  
 Industrial Clerical  
 Alliance affiliated with  
 A A F and L

Picketing went on for a few days, but soon the Manhattan Lerner Company, Inc., of which this store was a branch, entered a complaint against the Alliance, alleging practically the same illegal actions complained of by the plaintiff in *A. S. Beck v. Johnson, et al.*, given above. In short these allegations may be thus summed up: the defendant was not a labor union, no labor dispute existed, the defendant organization interfered with the normal procedure of the plaintiff's business, the defendant created disturbances and molested the customers and employees of the plaintiff, etc. The Lerner Company also stressed its claim that the use of "AAF and L" on the picket signs by the defendants was made to appear sufficiently similar to AF of L so that the prospective customers might mistake the "AAF and L" to be AF of L and thereby assume that the American Federation of Labor was supporting the picketers. The "AAF and L" was, of course, an abbreviation of Hamid's Afro-American Federation of Labor, which had not then nor has it since been incorporated by the State of New York. This action resulted in the case, *Manhattan Lerner Company, Inc., Plaintiff—against—Sufi Adul Hamid, as President of the Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance, et al.*, which was argued before Justice Cotillo, New York Supreme Court, New York County. The plaintiff made a motion for an injunction restraining the defendant organization from pick-

eting before its premises, etc. Justice Cotillo decided the case as follows:

Manhattan Lerner Co., Inc., *v.* Sufi Abdul Hamid—Motion for an injunction is granted. It does not appear that defendants are a labor union, but on the contrary are using a union name as a cloak for their activities. The use of the letters A.A.F.L. is an ingenious device to induce the belief that the defendants belong to the American Federation of Labor.<sup>24</sup>

So ended another attempt to organize the Negro clerks in Harlem stores and to open opportunities for greater employment for other Negro workers.

Some of the incidental results of these two situations are both interesting and significant. Recognition by the masses of the fact that both organizations were instrumental in getting employment other than the usual "porter" and cleaning work for some Negroes caused them to consider seriously why they were denied such opportunities as were rightfully theirs. It also created within the people of Harlem a race and class consciousness which in turn made them weigh carefully the principles and aims of the two organizations. Despite the fact that neither was a legitimate labor organization, both demonstrated the possibility of great work that could be done by labor organizations. The workers were made aware of the exploitations under which they labored and were encouraged to action by the assurances of the support of the public, exhibited by its refusal in many cases to buy from stores that were picketed. On the whole, they were awakening to the value of collective bargaining power with which to protect their economic interests and assert their rights. So convinced of this were they that they began to apply for membership in the bona fide clerks' unions which had jurisdiction over this section of Manhattan. As pointed

<sup>24</sup> *New York Law Journal*, June 26, 1935.



out above, the unions, realizing the fertility of the field, replied by setting up special organization committees to work on the problem.

*The Harlem Labor Committee and The Negro Labor Committee:* About the time that Hamid was getting his organization started, there began a revival of a movement first attempted in 1925 in the form of the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers. This early movement had died out, as pointed out in the last chapter, when its chairman changed his services to aiding in the organization of pullman porters and when its work was hampered by the lack of finances. Released from that task of organizational work and realizing that Negro workers in New York City were at this time quite organization conscious—partially because of the influence of NRA—this former chairman of the Trade Union Committee, Frank R. Crosswaith, planned another similar committee. To that end, he called together early in December, 1934 a group of Negro wage earners and trade unionists. Out of this meeting the Harlem Labor Committee was organized with the following officers and union affiliations: Chairman, Frank R. Crosswaith, general organizer, International Ladies Garment Workers' Union; Vice-Chairman, Bertram Taylor, Carpenters' Union, Local 1888; and secretary, Noah C. A. Walters, Jr., Building Service Employees Union, Local 32-B. Other members of the Committee included a member from the following unions: Teachers' Union; Local 22, International Ladies Garment Workers' Union; Motion Picture Operators Union, Local 306; Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; and Union Mechanics Association. (The Union Mechanics Association is composed of Negro members of the Building Trades Unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.)<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Report, The Harlem Labor Committee, December, 1934 to March, 1935, New York, p. 1.*

At the Committee's first meeting, held a week later, the policy and program of the Committee were formulated as follows: (1) to cooperate with only bona fide trade unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor seeking to organize Negro workers, (2) to initiate organization campaigns wherever possible and whenever necessary and at all times to counsel with the local leaders of the A. F. of L. in such campaigns, (3) to utilize Negro Labor News Service for the purpose of carrying on an educational campaign through existing Negro newspapers and magazines to the end of developing among Negro wage earners a desire for organized action as workers, (4) to stage periodical labor demonstrations in Harlem in the form of mass meetings, parades, outdoor meetings, etc., (5) to publish from time to time leaflets dealing with specific problems of Negroes in particular trades to offset the anti-trade union propaganda of the open shoppers and Communists, and (6) to cooperate generally with all unions facing problems involving Negro workers.<sup>26</sup> With this program the committee set out to take up to the work of bringing the message of trade unionism to Negro workers and of leading Negro workers to trade unions—a work ably begun ten years previously by the Trade Union Committee. Following this scheme, the Committee, through mass meetings and personal contacts with workers, assisted many Negro workers in gaining admittance on “an equality basis” in various unions, among which were: the Motion Picture Operators Local 306; the Cleaners', Dyers', Pressers' and Drivers Union, Local 184; the Building Service Employees International Union, Local 32-B in which there were about 9,000 Negroes of whom 4,000 were in Harlem; the Shoe Repairers of Greater New York; the Dining Car Employees, Local 370, an American Federation of Labor affiliate which was fighting the Brotherhood of Dining

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Car Employees, an independent Negro union and—it is alleged—a company union; the International Cloth, Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers' Union; the International Laundry Workers' Union; the Grocery Chain Store Executive and Employees' Association; the American Federation of Actors; the International Ladies Garment Workers'; the Celluloid and Cataline Workers' Union; the Mattress and Box Spring Makers' Union; the Burlap Bag Workers' Union and the Taxi Chauffeurs Union, 19795, A. F. of L.<sup>27</sup> This list, showing a great variety of Unions, is somewhat indicative of the broad scope of the Committee's activities, although it was limited to cooperative work with the American Federation of Labor Unions only.

The Committee, however, soon arrived at the opinion that as a segregated Negro organization, its powers and opportunities to be of real service to workers in general and to Negro workers in particular were so limited that it was not accomplishing all that was possible in drawing Negroes into the labor movement, in advising Negro workers seeking union membership or in developing influence and prestige within the organized labor movement in order to break down barriers that operated to make the Negro workers hostile toward organized labor. Recognition of these facts caused the chairman again to propose a plan for a central body, composed of Negro and white trade unionists, which would "serve the Negro workers in the same manner as the United Hebrew Trades serves the Jewish workers, as the Women's Trade Union League serves women in industry and as the Italian Chamber of Labor serves workers of Italian nationality",<sup>28</sup> that is, an organization that would do for them things that this Committee found itself incapable of doing well for Negro workers. To consider the organization of

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.

such an agency the Harlem Labor Committee planned a conference to meet in July, 1935.

During the early weeks of June and July, 1935 the Harlem Labor Committee circulated a "call" to all bona fide white and Negro unions—those affiliated with the American Federation of Labor—in which it outlined the purpose of the proposed conference and requested these unions to send official, plenipotentiary delegates. Accordingly there convened on July 20, 1935 in the auditorium of the Renaissance Casino, 138th Street and Seventh Avenue—in the heart of Harlem—the first Negro Labor Conference.<sup>20</sup> The response to the "call", illustrated by the presence of delegates from fifty-three Labor Unions and Nine Fraternal organizations, was most encouraging and was a big boost to the conference from the start. Among these participating unions and other organizations represented were:

*Participating Organisations*

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, N. Y. Joint Board

American Federation of Musicians, Local #802

Amalgamated Ladies Garment Cutters Union, Local #10, I L G W U

Bakery & Confectionery Workers Union, Local #507

Blouse & Waistmakers Union, Local #25, I L G W U

Bookkeepers, Stenographers, & Accountants Union, Local #12646

Bonnaz Singer and Hand Embroiderers, Tuckers, Stitchers, & Pleaters Union, Local # 66, I L G W U

Bricklayers Union, Local #37

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

Brotherhood of Carpenters, Local #385

Brotherhood of Painters, Local #261

Building Service Employees Union, 32B

<sup>20</sup> The writer attended this conference.

- Building Service Employees Union, 10B  
 Building Service Employees Union, 149B  
 Capmakers Union, Local #1  
 Carpenters & Joiners Union, Local #1888  
 Celluloid, Catalin, Galalith Workers Union  
 Children's Dress & Housedressmakers Union, Local #91,  
     I L G W U  
 Cloak, Skirt & Dress Pressers Union, Local #35, I L G W U  
 Cleaners, Dyers & Pressers Union  
 Cloak, Dress Drivers & Helpers Union, Local # 102,  
     I L G W U  
 Cloak & Suit Tailors Union, Local #9, I L G W U  
 Cooks & Kitchen Workers Union, Local #89  
 Corset & Brassiere Workers Union, Local #32  
 Dining Car Employees Union, Local #370  
 Doll & Toy Workers Union, Local #18230  
 Dressmakers Union, Local #22, I L G W U  
 Dress & Waist Pressers Union, Local #60, I L G W U  
 Excavators & Building Laborers Union, Local #731  
 Greater N. Y. Council International Building Service Union  
 Italian Dressmakers Union, Local #89, I L G W U  
 Joint Council Knit Goods Workers Union  
 Joint Board Cloak, Suit, & Shirtmakers Union  
 Joint Board Dress & Waistmakers Union  
 Ladies Apparel Shipping Clerks Union, Local #19953  
 Ladies Neckwear Workers Union, Local #142, I L G W U  
 Ladies Tailors & Theatrical Costume Workers Union, Local  
     #38, I L G W U  
 Laundry Workers International Union  
 Laundry Workers Union, Local #290  
 Millinery Workers Union, Local #24  
 Mineral Water Workers Union, Local #331  
 Motion Picture Operators Union, Local #306  
 Painters & Decorators of America, Local #848  
 Painters, Decorators, Paperhangers of America, District  
     Council, Local #9  
 Pocketbook Workers International Union

Paperbox Makers Union  
Retail Dairy, Grocery & Fruit Clerks Union, Local #338  
Retail Hat & Furnishings Salesmen's Union, Local #721  
Suitcase, Bag & Portfolio Workers Union  
United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners Union, Local  
#2090  
Upholsterers' Carpet & Linoleum Mechanics International  
Union of North America, Local #140B  
United Hebrew Trades  
Van Drivers & Helpers Union, Local #814

*Fraternal Organizations Represented*

Home Relief Bureau Employees Association  
Ministers Union National  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored  
people  
National Urban League  
Problem's Cooperative Association  
Union Mechanics Association  
Workmen's Circle—(Branches—66: 66B: 277: 500: 543:  
536: 417)  
Workers' Unemployed Union of Greater New York City  
Ashland Place Branch, B'klyn—Young Women's Christian  
Association.<sup>80</sup>

These organizations represent unions of practically every organized industry or trade in New York City, showing again the great interest or perhaps curiosity aroused by the meeting.

Many outstanding leaders in the field of organized labor, finding that for various reasons they could not attend, sent inspiring messages and best wishes for success. William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, wrote:

<sup>80</sup> The first Negro Labor Conference, *Proceedings*, New York, July 29, 1935, pp. 4-5.

TO THE OFFICERS AND DELEGATES IN ATTENDANCE  
AT THE NEGRO LABOR CONFERENCE.

*My Fellow Workers:*

I sincerely regret because of the multiplicity of duties I am called upon to discharge in an official way it is impossible for me to accept the invitation extended to me to attend and address your conference. However, I wish to assure you that I am deeply interested in the purpose of the conference and in the economic and industrial welfare of all those who may be in attendance and of those they represent. It is the purpose and objective of the American Federation of Labor to organize all workers regardless of creed, color, sex, or nationality. Notwithstanding what those may say who are constantly assailing its policies, principles and procedure, there is no organization in America which stands more firmly for the protection of the economic rights of all classes of people regardless of creed, color, or nationality. We are constantly endeavoring to promote a condition where all international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, clothed with autonomous authority, will conform to the declarations, procedure and principles of the A.F.O.L., itself regarding the admission of members without regard to race, creed, or nationality. We are certain that time, patience and good judgment will bring about a solution of our vexed problem.

In the meantime it becomes the duty of the representatives of all workers to cooperate together not in denunciation of each other but in a common purpose to compose all differences and to solve our economic and industrial problems.

I repeat my assurance of an official and personal interest in the welfare of the Negroes everywhere and particularly of those who are in attendance at your conference and those whom they have the honor to represent.

WILLIAM GREEN, *President,*  
*American Federation of Labor.*<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Others who sent messages were David Duvinsky, President of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union—whose locals are certainly conspicuous in the above list of delegations—and Max Danish, Editor of "Justice" the official organ of the I.L.G.W.U. Greetings and wishes for success came in from many other organizations.

Addresses, all of which denounced any and all existing discriminatory practices against Negro workers by unions and organized workers in general and stressed the belief that the solidarity of all labor regardless of race, creed or color is labor's only protection against the cruel and hard fate of a competitive economic order—in a capitalist society—solidarity that can be accomplished only by the organization of all workers into mixed labor unions, were given by: William Mahoney, New York State Organizer of the American Federation of Labor; James Bambrick, President, Greater New York Council of Building Service Employees' International Union; Morris Feinstone, Executive Secretary of the United Hebrew Trades; Julius Hochman, Vice-President of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union; Gertrude Elise Ayers, former Vice-President of the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers; A. Phillip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; and Frank R. Crosswaith, chairman of the Harlem Labor Committee, the latter three being Negroes. All of these are outstanding in the organized labor movement in New York among both white and Negro workers.

Like most conferences this one passed a number of resolutions, the subjects of which indicate the variety of interests represented at the conference, the general view of those in the organized labor movement, the Negro's relation to it, and the scope of the relationship of organized labor to the social and economic questions of the day. Since space will not permit the inclusion of all of these resolutions here, ex-



cerpts from them are given so that an idea of what they covered may be obtained:

*Resolution No. 1—The A. F. o. L. and the Negro*

. . . THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Conference of Negro and white labor declare its unyielding opposition to all forms of racial prejudice and discriminatory practices in any part of the organized labor movement and pledges itself to combat this evil wherever manifested.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Conference call upon every section of the labor movement to remove from their constitution, by-laws, or rituals wherever such exists all references that reflect unfavorably upon racial groups and thus tend to maintain an unwholesome division within the ranks of organized labor, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Conference call upon labor everywhere to close ranks and effect that greatly to be desired solidarity of labor without which there can be no salvation for either black or white labor.

*Resolution No. 2—The 30 Hour Week*

. . . THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Conference of Negro and white labor assembled in the Renaissance Casino, 138th St. & 7th Ave., New York City on July 20th herewith endorses the fight of organized labor for 30 HOUR WORK WEEK.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that it is the sense of this conference that this 30 HOUR WORK WEEK shall not result in the reduction of the existing wage levels based upon the longer work hours.

*Resolution No. 3—Child Labor*

. . . THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Negro Labor Conference of Negro and white trade unionists assembled in the Renaissance Casino 138th St. & 7th Ave., New York City on July 20th, 1935 go on record condemning the legislature of New York State for failing to ratify the Child Labor Amendment, and we call upon organized labor and the enlightened citizens of this state to defeat those state representatives who failed to support this amendment when it was recently before the legis-

lature and also to elect in their places candidates pledged to ratification of the Child Labor Amendment in the next session of the legislature.

*Resolution No. 4—Workers' Rights Constitutional Amendments*

. . . BE IT RESOLVED, that this Negro Labor Conference of Negro and White members of trade unions endorses the following WORKERS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT to the U. S. Constitution; known as "Article XXI".

THE AMENDMENT

....Sec. 1. The Congress shall have power to establish uniform laws throughout the United States to regulate, limit, prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age; to limit the work and establish minimum compensation of wage earners; to provide for the relief of aged, invalidated, sick and unemployed wage earners and employees in the form of periodical grants, pensions, benefits, compensations or indemnities from the public treasury, from contributions of employers, wage earners and employees, or from one or more of such sources; to establish and take over natural resources, properties and enterprises in manufacture, mining, commerce, transportation, banking, public utilities, and other business to be owned and operated by the Government of the United States, or agencies thereof for the benefit of the people, and the consumers.

....Sec. 2. The power of the several states to enact social welfare legislation is unimpaired by this Article, that no such legislation shall abridge or conflict with any Act of Congress under the Article.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Negro Labor Conference call upon the Federal representatives and senators from this state to actively promote the fight for the immediate passage of this Amendment. Be it still further resolved that this conference join with organized labor throughout the nation in the campaign for the adoption of the above Amendment.

*Resolution No. 5—Negro Clergymen*

. . . BE IT RESOLVED, that this conference of Negro and white trade unionists hereby call upon all Negro clergymen to devote at least one Sunday per month in consideration of the economic plight of their worker—parishioners with a view toward enlightening them to the efficacy of united economic action, and to encourage them to join bona fide trade union organizations as a means of advancing their economic and social interest.

*Resolution No. 6—The Negro Press*

. . . BE IT RESOLVED, that this conference of Negro and white trade unionists hereby call upon the Negro press to recognize its responsibility to Negro workers by supporting and encouraging the efforts of Negro workers to effect bona fide trade union organization to advance their economic and social interests.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this conference is happy to note that the one outstanding Negro Journal that is manifesting increasing interest and sympathy with the industrial and socio-economic problems of the Negro workers is the *New York Amsterdam News*, and we hereby compliment the editor and publishers of the said *New York Amsterdam News* for its attitude in these premises.

*Resolution No. 7—The International Ladies Garment Workers' Union*

. . . THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Negro Labor Conference composed of Negro and white trade unionists congratulate the officers and members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union upon its edifying example of labor solidarity—regardless of race, creed, or color and hope that other labor units will emulate its example for the general good of all labor.

*Resolution No. 8—The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*

. . . THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this conference of Negro and white trade unionists congratulate the officers and members of the B'hood of Sleeping Car Porters Union and extend to them in their hour of success Fraternal Greetings and the hand of Fellowship.

May the victory of the Brotherhood encourage other workers Negro and white, to organize and destroy Company Unions—the evil incarbate of modern industrial workers.

*Resolution No. 9—The Workers' Unemployed Union*

. . . BE IT RESOLVED, THAT we, the assembled Negro and white trade unionist in this Conference urge the organization and full co-operation of the organized trade union movement in the organizing of the unemployed and relief workers of New York City into the Workers' Unemployed Union, to the end that economic interest of Negro and white unemployed may be protected and advanced.

*Resolution No. 10—*

. . . BE IT RESOLVED, that the complete minutes and proceedings of this first Negro Labor Conference be sent to all local A. F. O. L. unions represented in this Conference and if the funds permit to all local unions in Greater N. Y. affiliated with the A. F. O. L. and to all respective bodies representatives of the A. F. O. L. . . .

Several other resolutions on "Freedom of Angelo Herndon," "Tom Mooney", "the Scottsboro Boys", "Organization of a Labor Party", "Against Fascism" and "the Ethiopian War Crisis" were also introduced but were merely referred to the Negro Labor Committee—explained in the next paragraph—for consideration and action.<sup>22</sup>

The most important feature of the Conference was the report of the Organization Committee, which proposed plans for the creation of the Negro Labor Committee, the object for which the conference had convened. This Negro Labor Committee was to be an instrument representative of the spirit, sentiment and trade-union policy reflected in the resolutions and deliberations of the Conference; was to be composed of twenty-five Negro and white members of various bona fide trade unions; was to have as officers a chairman,

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-20.

(five) Vice-Chairmen, an Executive Secretary, a Financial Secretary-Treasurer and others to be appointed by the Committee; and was to be financed by donations from trade unionists and trade-union organizations in accord with the policy and program of the committee.<sup>28</sup> Its purposes were:

1. To cooperate with existing trade unions in the organization of unorganized Negro workers.

2. To conduct workers' education classes and institutes in order to make the Negro workers conscious of their class interest and power and find their rightful place as part of the broad American trade union movements.

3. To participate in, and to assist in organizing and developing strikes on the part of existing bona fide trade unions against wage cuts, for higher wages, shorter working hours, better working conditions, and the right of self organization.

4. To establish and maintain a Negro Labor News Service for the publicizing of the struggles of the workers in general and the Negro workers' in particular to the end of making the Negro workers more labor minded.

5. To work in the interest of bringing all available Negro workers into the AFOL and to advocate mixed instead of separate locals, and to oppose all discriminatory practices based upon race or other unimportant differences wherever such exists.

6. To work and fight for the elimination of the color bar, and color pledges in the rituals of any national and international union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

The general program and activities of the Negro Labor Committee were to conform to and be in harmony with the "Trade Union Policy and Program" of the American Federation of Labor. In reference to the proposal there was heated debate from the floor on the question of whether the limitation of the activities of the Committee to organizations or unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

would definitely exclude a great number of workers, both white and Negro, from whatever advantages the Committee might offer. A. Philip Randolph brought this discussion to a close when he stated that the Committee wanted to build a machine that would represent some strength and asserted that in order to accomplish this end it should originally be composed of existing organizations already having the support of the recognized organized labor movement of the land—the American Federation of Labor. The Committee would then be in a position to seek out the masses of unorganized black and white workers and put them in their logical place in the ranks of the American Federation of Labor. After a few more remarks, the vote was taken, and the Negro Labor Committee was thereby established by a great majority vote. The personnel of the Committee was then determined. Following are the names of the members elected:

Frank R. Crosswaith

Gen'l. Org. I. L. G. W. U. and Chairman Harlem Labor  
Committee

A. Philip Randolph

President Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union

Thomas Young

Vice-President of Building Service Employees Union 32-B

Julius Hochman

Vice-President of I. L. G. W. U., General Manager Joint  
Dressmakers Union

Abraham Miller

Executive Secretary of Joint Board New York, Amalgamated  
Clothing Workers Union

Noah C. A. Walter, Jr.

Secretary Harlem Labor Committee

Winifred Gittens

Blouse and Waistmakers Union #25, I. L. G. W. U.  
(Member Executive Board)

**Murry Baron**

Mgr. Suitcase, Bag & Portfolio Workers Union.

**I. Laderman**

President International Pocketbook Worker's Union

**Clifford McLeod**

Chairman Harlem Council Building Service Employees  
Union, 32-B

**Murry Gross**

Bus. Agent Dressmakers Union, #22, I. L. G. W. U.  
(Executive Board)

**Wm. Alex. Conaway**

American Federation of Musicians, #802 (Member  
Executive Board)

**Jack Butler**

Taxi Chauffeurs Union, #19795 (Member Executive  
Board)

**Joseph Machev**

Int'l. Representative Int'l. Laundry Workers Union

**Norman Donawa**

Dress & Waist Pressers Union, #60, I. L. G. W. U.  
(Member of Executive Board)

**Edward Richardson**

Van Drivers & Helpers Union, #814 (Member Exe-  
cutive Board)

**Edith Ranson**

Dressmakers Union, #22, I. L. G. W. U. (Member  
Executive Board)

**B. F. McLauren**

Nat'l. Org. Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union

**Lyra Sixto**

Ladies Neckwear Workers Union, #142, I. L. G. W. U.  
(Member Executive Board)

**P. A. Moore**

Bus. Agent & Org. Dining Car Employees Union, #370

**L. Levinson**

Jt. Council Knit Goods Workers Union (Member Execu-  
tive Board)

Betram Taylor

Bus. Agent & Org. Union Mechanics Assns., Vice Chairman  
Harlem Labor Committee

Jacob Mirsky

President Bricklayers Union, #37

Jack Wolheim

Motion Picture Operators Union, #306

Gorden Haynes

President Union Mechanic Assn., Member Executive  
Board, Carpenters and Joiners Union, #1888

Morris Feinstone

Executive Secretary United Hebrew Trades

Theodore Poston

New York Newspaper Guild.<sup>84</sup>

Here again, as in the case of the organizations present at the Conference, there is a representative of all of the important unions of the City. Later, Frank Crosswaith was made Chairman. Other officers were: Vice-Chairmen Morris Feinstone, Julius Hochman, Abraham Miller, A. Philip Randolph and Thomas Young, treasurer Philip Kapp, financial secretary Winifred Gitton and organizer Noah G. Walter, Jr. With this group of experienced Labor leaders the Negro Labor Committee set out "to organize and guide Negro Workers into bona fide trade unions and to establish the solidarity of Negro and White Labor."

About three months after the adjournment of the Conference the Negro Labor Committee established itself in its permanent quarters, a large, beautifully arranged and equipped auditorium and class rooms, in what it has named the Harlem Labor Center. Frank Crosswaith said that "It is our intention to make the Center the pivotal point from which will emanate all constructive efforts affecting the work-a-day life of Negro Labor in Harlem and greater

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.



New York".<sup>85</sup> The Center houses several unions, which have large Negro memberships. It also serves as the West Harlem Branch of the educational departments of Local 22 of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union, which conducts classes in trade unionism, labor problems and labor history, social sciences, the history of Negro labor and cultural classes such as art, dancing and singing, etc. It is also building up a workers' library for the organized and unorganized workers who frequent its auditorium and class rooms.

The great enthusiasm and apparently sincere interest expressed by the organized labor movement of New York City and by individual Negro and white workers and organizations in the union activities of Negroes during and immediately after the NRA period show beyond a doubt realization of two facts on the part of all. In the first place, labor itself had become increasingly aware of the inevitable need for united action to pull the Negro worker away from the arms of "open-shoppers" and general exploiters of the masses of labor. It is becoming generally recognized that white labor cannot free itself from the horrors of industrial slavery so long as black labor is not elevated. In the second place, Negro workers themselves, obviously becoming more conscious of the growing importance of collective bargaining through trade union action as the most effective means of coping with their economic problems, are no longer relying solely on sympathizers from among the whites to lead them and are therefore taking the initiative themselves.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Frank Crosswaith, Chairman of Negro Labor Committee, September 16, 1935.

## CHAPTER V

### EXTENT OF MEMBERSHIP IN UNIONS

ABOUT the time that the call for the first Negro Labor Conference was being circulated among trade and labor unions of New York City in late June, 1935, another actual study of Negroes in these unions, in Manhattan alone, was begun.<sup>1</sup> Among the items of formal information requested were figures on both the total and Negro membership so that the exact extent of Negro membership in unions could be determined. Of the 275 local unions in Manhattan 224 cooperated by allowing their books to be examined and by giving the requested information. In many cases, unions had no record of the exact number of members and, therefore, gave estimates as they did in reporting their membership figures to the Central Trades and Labor Council, in the case of the unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. This chapter will give merely a tabular summarization of these figures—representing the number and proportion of Negroes holding membership in unions. A great deal of light will be thrown on the extent of Negro membership in the various unions when other information as to the general relationship of Negroes to these unions is presented in the following two chapters and in Appendix IV, which discuss experiences of unions with Negro members and the experiences of Negro member themselves. The analysis here, however, will first show the extent of member-

<sup>1</sup> Personal interviews with labor union officials of New York City, made by this writer, July-December, 1935. All factual information used in this chapter is taken from these interviews.

ship in all unions as a whole and then in the unions of the various industrial groupings. Ten groups of industries, under which the unions are very well classified, were selected. Tables for all industries and for each individual industrial group are presented in the following paragraphs.

TABLE XIV

TOTAL AND NEGRO ORGANIZED WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS INDUSTRIES,  
MANHATTAN, 1935

Industries	Total	Negro	Percent Negro
All Industries .....	424,794	39,574	9.3
Clothing and Textile Industries .....	153,761	6,704	4.4
Transportation and Communication..	57,081	14,176	24.8
Domestic and Personal Service .....	41,862	9,400	22.5
Building Trades .....	37,536	1,008	2.7
Food, Liquor and Tobacco Industries.	31,550	1,948	6.2
Paper Manufacturing, Printing and Publishing .....	27,384	78	0.3
Amusements and Professions .....	22,818	2,108	9.2
Public Service .....	17,900	2,250	12.6
Metal and Machinery Industries ....	8,194	235	2.9
Leather Industries .....	4,200	66	1.6
Miscellaneous .....	22,508	1,601	7.1

This table shows that in this 82 percent sample of the unions of Manhattan there were 424,794 members of whom 39,574 were Negroes—9.3 percent. While the actual figures of previous counts, especially the 1928 count by John T. Dole as given in Table XIII of Chapter III, are in no wise comparable with these, the proportions are. In 1928 Negroes formed 3.8 percent of organized workers; in 1935 they composed 9.3 percent of organized workers—quite an increase. From this indication it seems that they are now a much greater part of the organized labor movement. Perhaps, their activity described in the last chapter accounts to a great extent for this increased proportion. Further inspection of the table shows that in no industrial group do Negroes

compose the greater part of the organized workers. In two, "Transportation and Communication" and "Domestic and Personal Service", they constitute a relatively high percentage, 24.8 and 22.5 respectively. On the other hand, in one, "Paper Manufacturing, etc.," they do not constitute even 1 percent. The proportions in other groups range between these extremes. Previous discussion, especially in Chapter I, of the occupational trends among Negroes showed that there was a similar relationship between all the gainfully occupied workers of those groups. Another interesting observation comes from the added information that 373,081 of these organized workers of whom 33,449 are Negroes, hold membership in unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. In this group Negroes form 9 percent while in the remaining group, 51,713 of whom 6,125 are Negroes, which is composed of workers in unions not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor—mainly industrial unions—they form 11.8 percent. This is apparently an indication of the possible truth in assertions that a great number of Negro workers, realizing the indifferent and reluctant attitude of A. F. of L. unions toward them in the past but still desiring union membership, have turned toward the more friendly independent industrial unions. Consideration of the more detailed analyses in the tables by industries and of the remarks on individual unions in the next chapter and in Appendix IV will at least partially explain these possibilities.

#### MEMBERSHIP BY INDUSTRIES

For each industrial group or other classification listed in Table XIV above a separate table has been constructed, showing the total membership and Negro membership for each local union and the percentage of Negro membership. Membership figures for the locals of the international and

national unions are to be found in the column captioned "Local Total". The membership of each international or national union is in the column marked "Grand Total". In the case of the independent local unions the membership figures are put in the "Grand Total" column. This procedure is followed in order that the exact craft or type of work in which Negro members are concentrated or vice versa can be determined by a glance at the table. The reader is again reminded that the sole purpose of this section is the presentation of the absolute and proportionate extent of Negro membership in the trade and labor unions of Manhattan.

Membership in Unions of the Clothing and Textile Industries—presented by:

TABLE XV

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF THE CLOTHING AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
All Unions .....		153,761		6,704	4.4
Clothing Workers of America, Amalgamated * .....		7,350		141	1.9
Local 11—Children's Jacket Pressers .....	500		—		—
Local 158—Wholesale Clothing Clerks .....	1,500		25		1.7
Local 169—Washable Jacket, Pants and Novelty Workers	†		†		
Local 243—Shirt Makers—Pressers .....	500		25		5.0
Local 246—Shirt Makers—Cutters .....	200		—		—
Local 248—Shirt Makers—Operators .....	1,500		6		0.4
Local 250—United Neckwear Makers .....	2,800		85		3.0
Local 251—United Neckwear Cutters .....	300		—		—
Garment Workers' Union, International Ladies * .....		128,275	—	6,260	4.9
Local 1—Cloak and Suit Operators .....	8,000		—		—

TABLE XV—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Local 10—Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters ..	8,500		2		‡
Local 17—Infant, Child Coat and Reefer Makers .....	2,800		10		0.4
Local 20—Waterproof Garment Workers .....	700		1		0.1
Local 22—Dressmakers ....	30,000		3,000		10.0
Local 23—Skirt Makers ....	†		†		
Local 25—Blouse and Waist Makers .....	2,800		400		14.3
Local 32—Corset and Brais- siere Makers .....	†		†		
Local 35—Cloak, Skirt and Dress Pressers .....	5,000		50		1.0
Local 38—Ladies' Tailors, Custom Dress-makers, etc.	1,200		12		1.0
Local 40—Belt Makers .....	1,325		60		4.5
Local 60—Dress and Waist Pressers .....	4,500		700		15.6
Local 62—White Goods Workers .....	12,000		1,000		8.5
Local 64—Button Hole Makers .....	50		—		—
Local 66—Bonnaz, Singer and Hand Embroiderers, Tuck- ers, Stitchers and Pleaters.	3,200		100		3.1
Local 82—Examiners and Bushelers .....	400		—		—
Local 89—Italian Dress and Waist Makers .....	43,000		—		—
Local 102—Cloak and Dress Drivers and Helpers ....	1,500		500		33.3
Local 132—Button and Nov- elty Workers .....	450		50		11.1
Local 142—Ladies' Neckwear Workers .....	2,750		375		13.6
Local 177—Ladies' Garment Alteration Workers .....	100		—		—
Garment Workers of America, United *		†		†	
Local 3—Tailors—Coatmakers	†		†		
Local 8—Tailors—Pants Makers .....	†		†		
Local 178—Tailors—Overall Makers .....	†		†		
Hatters, Cap & Millinery Work- ers International Union, United *		16,636		300	1.8

TABLE XV—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Local 7—United Hat Trimmers .....	900		—		—
Local 8—Men's Felt Hat Workers .....	736		—		—
Local 24—Millinery Workers	12,000		200		1.6
Local 42—Millinery Blockers	3,000		100		3.3
Tailors' Union of America, Journeymen * .....		1,500		3	0.2
Local 1—Journeymen Tailors	1,500		3		0.2
Textile Workers of America, United .....		†		†	
Local 2440—Textile Trimmers .....	†		†		

\* Affiliated with American Federation of Labor.

† Figures not given out by union.

‡ Less than 0.1 percent.

In this group, which represents the most highly organized industry in Manhattan, there are six international and national unions composed of thirty-eight locals, all affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The largest of these is the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, numbering 128,275 of the total membership of the group, 153,761, and 6,260 of the total Negro membership of the group, 6,704. The proportion of Negroes in this union is slightly higher than that for the group. In several of the locals, 22, 25, 60, 102, 132 and 142, Negro members constitute 10 percent or over of the total local membership. These, on the whole, are semi- or un-skilled workers. On the other hand, in many others they hold either no membership or less than 1 percent—particularly in the more highly skilled crafts such as the cutters of local 10 and the operators of Local 1. In the other unions of the group Negro membership is practically negligible. The group ranks third in the number of Negro members.

Membership in Unions of Transportation and Communication Workers  
—presented by:

TABLE XVI

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND  
LOCAL UNIONS OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION  
WORKERS, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
All Unions .....		57,081		14,176	24.8
Conductors, Order of Railway ‡	†	†	—	—	—
Engineers Beneficial Association, Marine .....		840	—	—	—
Local 33—Marine Engineers..	840		—	—	—
Firemen and Engineers, Brother- hood of Locomotive ‡ .....	†	†	—	—	—
Licensed Officers of United States of America, United .....		1,300	—	—	—
Longshoremen's Association, In- ternational * .....		5,610		694	12.4
Local 874—Commercial Check- ers .....	600		1		0.2
Local 791—General Longshore Workers .....	1,400		150		10.7
Local 895—General Longshore Workers .....	200		20		10.0
Local 933—Tugboat Workers .	560		10		1.8
Local 1124 — General Cargo Workers .....	600		12		2.0
Local 1171—Coopers & Cargo Repairmen .....	350		1		0.3
Local 1258 — Coastwise Long- shoremen .....	1,900		500		26.3
Masters, Mates and Pilots of America * ‡ .....	†	†	—	—	—
Local 1 — Masters, Mates and Pilots .....	†		—	—	—
Local 88—Deep Water Men ..	†		—	—	—
Local of Apprentices .....	†		—	—	—
Porters and Maids, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car, Local 1868 * .....		1,458		1,458	100.0
Railroad Trainmen, Brotherhood of ‡ .....	†	†	—	—	—
Railway and Steamship Employ- ees, Brotherhood of ‡ .....	†	†	—	—	—



TABLE XVI—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
Seamen's Union of America, International * .....		20,400		5,030	24.7
Boatmen's Local Union, United	1,400	30			2.1
Cooks and Stewards' Union of Atlantic & Gulf, Marine ...	7,000		2,000		28.6
Firemen's Union, Marine ....	12,000		3,000		25.0
Shipping Clerks, Ladies Apparel, Local 19953 * .....		4,000		1,900	47.5
Station Attendants of Grand Central Terminal, Brotherhood of		273		273	100.0
Taxi Chauffeurs' Union, Local 19795 * .....		†		50	
Teamsters and Chauffeurs, International Brotherhood of * ...		11,450		2,371	20.7
Local 138—Furniture and Bakers' Supply Drivers .....	1,200		300		25.0
Local 167—Poultry Drivers ..	500		10		2.0
Local 185—Cleaning and Dye House Drivers .....	450		1		0.2
Local 272—Garage Washers & Polishers .....	5,000		2,000		40.0
Local 643—Funeral Chauffeurs	1,100		—		—
Local 808—Railway Express Employees .....	2,000		—		—
Local 816—Express & Trucking Workers .....	1,200		60		5.0
Telegraphers' Union of North America, Commercial - Eastern Brokers' Division * † ..		250		—	—
Transport Workers' Industrial Union, Marine .....		7,000		2,300	32.9
Transport Workers' Union .....		4,500		100	2.2

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

† Figures not given out by union.

‡ Negroes excluded from membership by constitutional provision.

Despite the fact that six of the seventeen international and national unions of this group exclude Negro members by a constitutional provision, there are more organized Negro workers in the transportation and communication work in Manhattan than in any other type. Negroes also form a greater proportion of all organized workers in that group

than in any other. Further, there are in this group two unions having only Negro members, one of which, the Sleeping Car Porters (who often run as conductors in charge), is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Examination of the table shows, too, that most of the Negro members are concentrated in unions of water transportation workers, a great many being marine firemen, cooks and stewards. In connection with land transportation they are concentrated in the Teamsters' Union—as garage car washers and polishers. Although most Negro longshoremen are members of the Brooklyn Local, Local 1258—Coastwise Longshoremen of Manhattan, has a fairly large percentage of Negroes. As in the case of the clothing workers the Negroes are not represented in unions of the more highly skilled phases of the work.

Membership in Unions of Domestic and Personal Service Workers—presented by:

TABLE XVII

## TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN UNIONS OF DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL SERVICE WORKERS, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
All Unions .....		41,862		9,400	22.5
Barbers' International Union, Journeymen * .....		280		1	0.4
Local 1—Journeymen Barbers .	100		—		—
Local 3—Journeymen Barbers .	150		—		—
Local 9—Journeymen Barbers .	30		1		3.3
Building Service Employees' International Union * .....		41,582		9,399	22.6
Local 32A—Manhattan Superintendents .....				125	3.4
Local 32B—General Building Service Workers .....	3,700				28.3
Local 32C—Hotel and Hotel Apartment Workers .....	31,800		9,000		0.1
Local 135—Wardrobe & Check-Room Attendants .....	1,472		2		—
Local 149—Building Office Cleaners .....	500		—		6.0
	2,500		150		

TABLE XVII—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
Local 155—Exterminators and Fumigators .....	400		1		.2
Local 164—Office and Loft Building Superintendents....	1,210		121		10.0

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

In this group there are but two international unions, both affiliates of the American Federation of Labor. The group holds second place in the ranking according to number of Negro union members. Barbershops, those which employ Negroes, have not been organized as will be pointed out later. Hence, the one union member. In the Building Service Employees' Union most Negroes are in Local 32B—General Building Service Workers—superintendents, janitors, sextons, elevator tenders, porters, etc., forming a little over one-fifth of the total number. Although there is little variation in the degree of skill required for the work covered by the several locals of this union, the presence of Negroes is lacking in the unions covering the more desirable work because of the higher wage and shorter working day it offers. Most of these 9000 Negro members of Local 32B are employed in Harlem apartment houses and are affiliated with the Harlem Council of the Local.

Membership in Unions of the Building Trades Workers—presented by:

TABLE XVIII

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF THE BUILDING TRADES, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
All Unions .....		37,536		1,008	2.7
Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians, Federation of		3,500		50	1.4

TABLE XVIII—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union of America *		4,275		101	2.4
Local 34—Bricklayers	2,800		100		3.6
Local 52—Tile Layers	1,200		1		†
Local 84—Journeyman Stone Setters	275		—		—
Bridge & Structural Iron Workers, International Association of *		1,612		55	3.4
Local 170—Riggers & Machinery Movers	102		—		—
Local 447—Ornamental and Architectural Iron, Bronze and Metal Specialists	610		—		—
Local 455—Ornamental and Architectural Iron, Bronze and Metal Specialists	900		55		6.1
Carpenters and Joiners of America, United Brotherhood of *		7,103		96	1.4
Local 135—Carpenters	550		—		—
Local 246—Shop Woodwork & Machine Men	670		1		0.1
Local 257—Carpenters	790		10		1.3
Local 385—Outside Carpenters	600		7		1.2
Local 608—Carpenters	1,100		3		0.3
Local 1456—Dock & Pier Carpenters	1,800		6		0.3
Local 1536—Timbermen	168		1		0.6
Local 1657—Carpenters	480		3		0.6
Local 1888—Carpenters	65		65		100.0
Local 2090—Carpenters	800		—		—
Local 2725—Carpenters	80		—		—
Electrical Workers, International Brotherhood of *		6,000			
Local 3—Electrical Workers	6,000		—		—
Elevator Constructors, International Union of *		1,500			
Local 1—Elevator Constructors	1,500		—		—
Hod Carriers, Building & Common Laborers' Union of America, International *		5,748		635	11.1
Local 6A—Cement & Concrete Workers	600		10		1.7
Local 10—Bricklayers' Helpers	1,200		120		10.0
Local 30—Plasterers' Helpers	1,100		5		0.5

TABLE XVIII—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Local 45—Compressed Air Workers .....	600		80		13.3
Local 95—Housewreckers ....	1,600		200		12.5
Local 102—Compressed Air Tunnel Workers .....	642		220		34.3
House Wreckers' Union, Independent .....		450		10	2.2
Insulators & Asbestos Workers, Heat & Frost, International Association * ‡ .....		563		—	—
Local 12—Asbestos Workers..	563		—		—
Marble, Slate & Stone Polishers, Rubbers & Sawers, Tile & Marble Setters' Helpers and Terrazzo Helpers, International Association of * .....		1,310	—		—
Local 5—Machine Stone Workers, Rubbers & Helpers ....	200		—		—
Local 35—Mosaic & Terrazzo Workers' Helpers .....	360		—		—
Local 88—Tile Layers' Helpers	750		—		—
Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America, Brotherhood * .....		2,931		7	0.2
Local 51—Painters .....	930		6		0.6
Local 261—Decorators and Painters .....	1,300		—		—
Local 829—United Scenic Artists .....	339		1		0.3
Local 1087—Glaziers .....	362		—		—
Plasterers, Operative, International Association of the United States and Canada *..		750		50	7.0
Local 780—Cement Masons ..	750		50		7.0
Plumbers, Steam Fitters and Helpers' Union, Alteration..		450		4	0.9
Slate, Tile & Composition Roofers, Damp & Waterproof Workers' Association, United * ...		700		—	—
Local 8—Composition Roofers	700		—		—
Stone Cutters' Association of North America, Journeymen—New York Division .....		650		—	—

\* Affiliated with The American Federation of Labor.

† Less than 0.1 percent.

‡ Negroes excluded from membership by constitutional provision.

Among the unions of this group one, Insulators & Abestos Workers, excludes Negroes by constitution; nevertheless, it is quite noticeable that there are no Negroes in many of the other locals although there are Negro workers, according to the 1930 Census figures, engaged in these occupations. Obviously, other factors that limit or prohibit Negro membership in these unions are at work. Although this group has but 2.7 percent Negro members and ranks seventh in the list of groups of organized Negro workers, it has one union, Hod Carriers, Building & Common Laborers' Union of America, with an appreciable proportion of Negroes, 635 or 11.1 percent. This work, however, is also unskilled. The Carpenters and Joiners of America has a Negro local, No. 1888, which claims a membership of 65. In Local 34 of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' Union there are 100 Negro bricklayers in the total membership of 2800. Membership in all locals is, on the whole, comparatively small.

Membership in Unions of the Food, Liquor and Tobacco Industries—presented by:

TABLE XIX

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF THE FOOD, LIQUOR AND TOBACCO INDUSTRIES, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
All Unions .....		31,550		1,948	6.2
Bakery & Confectionery Workers' International Union of America *		2,705		6	0.2
Local 1—Bakers .....	560		—		—
Local 50—Baking Factory Workers .....	700		6		0.9
Local 505—Bread & Roll Bakers .....	700		—		—
Local 50579—Cake Bakers ...	400		—		—
Bakery Workers, Inside, Local 19,585 *		3,000		2	†

TABLE XIX—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Brewery, Flour, Cereal & Soft Drink Workers of America, International Union of * ...		1,150		12	1.0
Local 1—Brewers .....	450		—		—
Local 23—Beer Drivers .....	400		12		3.0
Local 59—Brewery Workmen .	300		—		—
Cigar Makers' International Union of America * .....		450		3	0.7
Local 144—Cigar Makers ....	340		3		0.9
Local 389—Cigar Makers ....	110		—		—
Dining Car Employees, Brotherhood of .....		850		850	100.0
Local 1—Pennsylvania R. R. Dining Car Employees .....	450		450		100.0
Local 3—New York Central R. R. Dining Car Employees	400		400		100.0
Egg Inspectors' Union, Local 11254 * .....		425		—	—
Fish Workers' Industrial Union..		400		3	0.7
Local 106—Fish Workers ....	400		3		0.7
Food Workers' Industrial Union.		6,400		370	5.6
Hotel & Restaurant Employees' International Alliance & Bartenders' International League of America * .....		11,420		670	5.9
Local 1—Waiters and Waitresses .....	2,000		—		—
Local 3—Bartenders .....	1,100		—		—
Local 16—Restaurant Employees & Bartenders .....	3,000		10		0.3
Local 89—Cooks & Kitchen Workers .....	400		10		2.5
Local 219—Waiters .....	270		—		—
Local 302—Delicatessen & Restaurant Counter men .....	4,500		500		11.1
Local 370—Dining Car Employees .....	150		150		100.0
Meat Cutters & Butcher Workmen of North America, Amalgamated * .....		2,150		7	0.3
Local 174—Butchers .....	450		—		—
Local 234—Butchers—Kosher Workers .....	800		—		—

TABLE XIX—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Local 234A—Butchers — Non-Kosher Workers .....	200		1		0.5
Local 234B—Butcher Delivery Clerks .....	200		6		3.0
Local 662—Salesmen & Poultry Workers .....	500		—		—
Meat Cutters' Union, Local 134..		250		20	8.0
Restaurant, Cafeteria & Culinary Employees					
Local 1 of American Labor Alliance .....		1,700		—	—
Sea Food Workers, United, Local 16975 *		650		5	0.8

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

† Less than 0.1 percent.

The number of Negro union members in this group is surprisingly low, because this is one of the industries to which the Negro has been traditionally attached, especially those branches dealing with the preparation and service of food. It is even more surprising to note that outside of the dining car waiters there are no Negroes among the organized waiters. The independent Negro union, Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees, and the Negro local of dining car employees affiliated with the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance as Local 370 have together 1,000 of the 1,948 Negro union members of the group. The remaining 948 are distributed over the other 27 local unions of the group. Local 302—Delicatessen & Restaurant Countermen—has 500 of these, and the Food Workers' Industrial Union has 370. As is seen from the table most of the other locals have either a very few or none at all.



Membership in Unions of the Paper Manufacturing, Printing and Publishing Industries—presented by:

TABLE XX

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF THE PAPER MANUFACTURING, PRINTING AND PUBLISHING INDUSTRIES, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
All Unions .....		27,384		78	0.3
Bookbinders, International Brotherhood of * .....		1,885		4	0.2
Local 9—Paper Rulers .....	30		—		—
Local 25—Bookbinders .....	385		2		0.5
Local 43—Bindery Women ...	500		1		0.2
Local 66—Bindery Women ...	170		—		—
Local 119—Paper Cutters ...	800		1		0.1
Lithographers of America, Amalgamated * .....		2,600		2	†
Local 1—Lithographers .....	2,600		2		†
Photo-Engravers' Union of North America, International * ....		2,400		5	0.2
Local 1—Photo-Engravers ...	2,400		5		0.2
Printing Pressmen's & Assistants' Union of North America, International * .....		8,250		38	0.5
Local 1—Paper Handlers & Sheet Straighteners .....	650		25		3.8
Local 2—New York Newspaper Pressmen & Assistants .....	2,600		—		—
Local 23—Press Assistants ...	2,000		7		0.3
Local 51—New York Printing Pressmen .....	3,000		6		0.2
Stereotypers' and Electrotypers' Union of North America, International * .....		1,577		3	0.2
Local 100—New York Electrotypers .....	393		2		0.5
New York Stereotypers .....	1,184		1		†
Typographical Union, International * .....		10,672		26	0.2
Local 6—Typographical Workers .....	9,621		25		0.3
Local 6A—Mailers' Union ...	845		1		0.1
Local 83—Hebrew-American Typographical Union .....	206		—		—

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

† Less than 0.1 percent.

These industries are among both the most highly skilled and the most highly organized. From the point of view of the total membership the group ranks sixth while in Negro membership it is at the bottom of the list of ten groups. Of the 27,384 members there are but 78 Negroes—just about .3 per cent! In but one local is there as much as 1 per cent; the 25 members of Local 1—Paper Handlers and Sheet Straighteners—form 3.8 percent of the membership of that local. This work, too, is mainly unskilled labor. Another 25 of the members are in Local 6 of the Typographical Union. This is skilled work. The story of the Negro workers in this industry is very interesting and is discussed at length in the following chapter and in Appendix IV.

Membership in Unions of Workers in the Amusements and Professions—presented by:

TABLE XXI

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF WORKERS IN AMUSEMENTS AND PROFESSIONS, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
All Unions .....		22,818		2,108	9.2
Actors and Artists of America, Associated * .....		3,831		280	7.3
Actors' Equity Association ...	3,500		280		8.0
Hebrew Actors' Association ..	331				
Motion Picture Operators' Union, Allied .....		300		7	2.3
Musicians, American Federation of * .....		15,300		1,800	11.8
Local 802—New York Federation of Musicians .....	15,300		1,800		11.8
Sound & Projection Engineers, Inc. ....		80			
Stage Employees & Motion Picture Machine Operators of the United States & Canada, International Alliance * ....		2,699		21	0.8
Local 52—Motion Picture Studio Mechanics .....	389		1		0.3
Local 306—Motion Picture Machine Operators .....	1,840		20		1.1

TABLE XXI—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Local 644—Photographers of Motion Picture Industry ....	170		—		—
Local 669—Film Technicians ..	300		—		—
Theatrical Federation Union, National .....		300		—	—
Theatrical Wardrobe Attendants, Local 16770 *		308		—	—

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

Practically all the Negro members of this group are in one union, Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians. The 1,800 Negroes in this local form 11.8 percent of the total membership of 15,300. The Actors' Equity Association has 280, and the remaining 28 are 27 motion picture machine operators and 1 motion picture studio mechanic. For membership in the other unions listed in the above table qualifications and initiation fees are so hard to meet that both the total membership and the Negro membership are quite limited.

Membership in Unions of Public Service Workers—presented by:

TABLE XXII

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
All Unions .....		17,900		2,250	12.6
Federation of Federal Employees, National .....		1,000		†	
Local 4—Federal Employees ..	1,000		†		
Post Office Clerks, National Federation *		3,000		500	16.7
Local 10 — New York Post Office Clerks .....	3,000		500		16.7
Postal Workers of America ....		1,200		350	29.2
Local 9 — New York Postal Workers .....	1,200		350		29.2
Public Relief Agencies, Association of Workers in .....		7,000		1,000	14.3

TABLE XXII—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Sanitary Chauffeurs and Drivers Protective Association .....		3,600		400	11.1
Local 148—Sanitary Drivers ..	3,600		400		11.1
Teachers, American Federation of * .....		2,100		†	
Local 5—New York Federation of Teachers .....	2,100		†		
Utility Employees of America, Brotherhood of .....		†		—	—
Local 100—Equity Local .....	†		—	—	—

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

† Figures not given out by the union.

Two of the unions in this group, the Federal Employees' and the Teachers', could not estimate the number of Negro members because no records of the racial identity of the members are kept on the union books. That being the case, the percentage, 12.6, representing the proportion of Negro members in the group is probably an understatement. The proportion of Negro memberships in the other unions of the group is representative of the proportion of Negroes to the total number of workers in public service pursuits.

Membership in Unions of the Metal and Machinery Industries—presented by:

TABLE XXIII

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF THE METAL AND MACHINERY INDUSTRIES, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
All Unions .....		8,194		235	2.9
Electroplaters' International Union * .....		248		6	2.4
Local 26—Electroplaters .....	248		6		2.4
Engineers, International Union of Operating .....		2,491		42	1.7
Local 3—Marine Engineers ...	600		20		3.3
Local 30—Operating Engineers	1,400		10		0.7
Local 125—Portable & Hoister Engineers .....	491		12		2.4
Firemen and Oilers, International Brotherhood of * .....		1,000		25	2.5

TABLE XXIII—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
Local 56—Firemen & Oilers ..	1,000		25		2.5
Metal and Allied Unions, Federation of .....		1,700		150	8.8
Local 302—Silver and Metal Fabricated Workers .....	700		75		10.7
Local 303—Metal Novelty Workers .....	1,000		75		7.5
Metal Workers' International Association, Sheet .....		2,000		6	0.3
Local 28—Sheet Metal Workers	1,550		6		0.4
Local 137—Sheet Metal Workers .....	450		—		—
Polishers' International Union, Metal * .....		500		6	1.2
Local 8—Metal Polishers ....	500		6		1.2
Spinners of New York, Metal....		255		—	—

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

Here, there are about 168 Negro metal workers and 67 Negro machinery workers, mainly engineers. Negroes are represented in all the unions except two, a local of sheet metal workers and a local of metal spinners. Of the entire group the 235 Negroes form 2.9 percent, and in one union, Local 302—Silver and Metal Fabricated Workers, they form 10.7 percent. On the whole, however, they are poorly represented when the number of such Negro workers available for membership is considered.

Membership in Unions of the Leather Industries—presented by:

TABLE XXIV

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS OF THE LEATHER INDUSTRIES, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	Percent Negro
All Unions .....		4,200		66	1.6
Leather Workers' International Union, United * .....		1,200		36	3.0
Local 48—Suitcase, Bag and Portfolio Workers .....	1,200		36		3.0
Shoe & Leather Workers' Union, United .....		3,000		30	1.0

TABLE XXIV—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
District 23—New York Workers .....	3,000		30		1.0

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

The Leather industries, too, have only a very small proportion of Negro members. In fact, they have very few organized workers of any kind and as a group rank at the bottom both in total and in Negro union membership. However poorly represented, Negro union members do form 1.6 percent of the group.

Membership in Miscellaneous Unions—presented by:

TABLE XXV

TOTAL AND NEGRO MEMBERSHIP IN MISCELLANEOUS INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL UNIONS, MANHATTAN, 1935

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
All Unions .....		22,508		1,601	7.1
Bill Posters & Billers of America, International Alliance of *..		300		—	—
Local 2—Bill Posters .....	300		—	—	—
Bill Posters & Ushers, Jewish *.		95		—	—
Bookkeepers, Stenographers and Accountants, Local 12646 *..		1,000		15	1.5
Cleaners', Dyers' and Pressers' Union, Local 18232 * .....		600		125	20.8
Clerks' International Protective Association, Retail * .....		1,590		25	1.6
Local 721—Hat & Furnishings Salesmen .....	†		1		
Local 743—Hardware, House Furnishings and Plumbing Clerks .....	65		1		1.5
Local 830—Retail Radio Salesmen .....	175		1		0.6
Local 906—Cigar Clerks .....	450		20		4.4
Local 1006—Retail Clothing Salesmen .....	500		—		—
Local 1102—Dry Goods Clerks	200		1		0.5
Local 1268—Retail Shoe Salesmen .....	200		1		0.5
Doll and Toy Workers Union, Local 18230 * .....		2,000		15	0.7

TABLE XXV—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
Hardware and Crockery Union, Wholesale, Local 18943 * ...		1,000		8	0.8
Jewelry Workers' Union, International .....		450		26	5.8
Local 1—Jewelry Workers ...	†		3		
Local 89—Optical Jewelry Workers .....	450		23		5.1
Lathers' International Union, Wood, Wire & Metal * .....		350		10	2.8
Local 308—Metal Lathers ....	350		10		2.8
Laundry Workers' International Union * .....		1,050		550	52.4
Local 280—Laundry Workers..	800		400		50.0
Local 290—Laundry Workers..	250		150		60.0
Mineral Water Workers' Union. Newspaper Guild, American ....		55		—	—
Newspaper Guild of New York Office Workers' Union .....	2,100	2,100	30	30	1.4
Paper Box Makers' Union, Local 18239 * .....		2,200		150	6.8
Pavers, Rammermen, Flag Layers, Bridge & Stone Curb Setters and Sheet Asphalt Pavers, International Union of * .....		1,000		25	2.5
Local 92—Asphalt Block Layers .....	28		28	28	100.0
Pharmacists' Union of Greater New York .....	28		28		100.0
Pocket-Book Workers' Union, International * .....		1,550		2	0.1
New York Local .....	2,000	2,000	23	23	1.1
Salesmen's Union of Greater New York, Provision * .....		200		—	—
Sales People's Union of Greater New York, Retail Women's Apparel .....		500		—	—
Upholsterers', Carpet and Linoleum Mechanics' International Union of North America *..		3,940		519	13.2
Local 44—Upholsterers .....	550		—	—	—
Local 45—Women Upholsterers	500		—	—	—
Local 70—Carpet & Linoleum Layers .....	270		—	—	—
Local 70B—Carpet & Linoleum Layers .....	135		3		2.2
Local 71—Carpet Sewers .....	185		—	—	—
Local 76—Wholesale Upholsterers .....	500		1		0.2
Local 76B—Furniture Workers	500		50		10.0
Local 140—Mattress Makers ..	300		15		5.0

TABLE XXV—Continued

Union	Total Membership		Negro Membership		Percent Negro
	Local Total	Grand Total	Local Total	Grand Total	
Local 140B—Metal Bed and Spring Workers .....	1,000		450		45.0
Window Cleaners' Protective Union * .....		500		50	10.0
Local 2—Window Cleaners ...	500		50		10.0

\* Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

† Figures not given out by the union.

In this group there are the unions that could not justifiably be classified under any of the others selected. In types of work they vary from the highly skilled and technical, such as jewelry workers, to the most unskilled, such as window cleaners. In the proportion of Negro members they vary from none to 60 percent in the mixed locals. There is one Negro local—Local 92, Asphalt Block Layers of the Pavers' Union. Particularly noticeable for the high proportion of Negro members are the Cleaners', Dyers' and Pressers' Union with 20.8 percent, the Locals 280 and 290 of the Laundry Workers' Union with 50 percent and 60 percent, respectively, and Local 140B—Metal Bed and Spring Workers of the Upholsterers', Carpet & Linoleum Mechanics' Union with 45 percent. Other unions with either a low or no percentage of Negro members are conspicuously distributed throughout the list. The reader will have observed each of these.

This brief presentation of the extent of membership in unions and this tabular analysis, it is hoped, have at least shown the number and the proportion of organized Negro workers in Manhattan, of organized Negro workers in the several industrial and other groupings used, and of the organized Negro workers in the folds of the individual local unions. As pointed out above, the two following chapters will attempt to clear up further some of the underlying factors that are determinants of the size of Negro membership in the unions.



## CHAPTER VI

### EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL UNIONS WITH NEGRO MEMBERS

IN addition to information on the extent of Negro membership in the labor unions of Manhattan, discussed in Chapter V, other facts concerning the general relationship of Negroes to the individual local unions was sought. This information had to do with four phases of that relationship: (1) membership—the qualifications for membership, whether or not Negroes held membership, and a brief statement of the history of Negro membership; (2) organization of Negro workers—how Negro workers were organized if methods other than those employed for all workers were used; (3) official relationship of Negroes to the union; and (4) activity of Negro members in meetings, on jobs and during strikes. In practically every case of the 224 local unions, about which definite information was obtained, the union officials interviewed by this writer were called upon without previous notice; therefore, the statements made by them were extemporaneous—not in any way premeditated or planned. So, it is a reasonable assumption that most of them are true expressions of the actual conditions and experiences with Negro members during and just after the N.R.A. period; nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that they were given by union officials and, consequently, may have been biased somewhat in favor of the union.

All of these experiences as given by union officials are classified in six groups, determined by the type of union relationship, and are discussed individually in the paragraphs

below. Because there is a great degree of similarity among them, this chapter will present descriptively and objectively samples of the typical experiences of each group. However, that complete information for all local unions investigated may be available, other similar experiences are classified by broad occupational groups such as those used in Chapter V and are included in Appendix IV.

Experiences of local unions barring Negro membership by constitutional or ritualistic provision: In this group are the locals, ten in Manhattan, which declare openly in their constitutions or rituals that Negroes are not admitted to membership. Most of these are old unions whose present officials give various and sundry explanations of the existence of such conditions today. Typical of these are:

**MASTERS, MATES, AND PILOTS OF AMERICA:<sup>1</sup>**

Local 1—Masters, Mates and Pilots

Local 88—Deep Water men

Local 7—Apprentices—Captain J. J. Scully, Secretary and National Organizer of the Masters, Mates and Pilots of America, stated that he regretted very much having to admit that there were no Negroes in any of the affiliated locals of the Masters, Mates and Pilots of America because they were definitely excluded by constitution. "We want to remove that Bar of discrimination at our National Convention in Washington, January, 1936. Too long have we allowed it to remain there, and we have become ashamed of it." Continuing, he said, "I'll tell you how the clause in the constitution got there. Originally, we started out as a social and fraternal organization. Later, we developed into a labor union and, thoughtlessly, have carried that unfair clause in our constitution, but we will remove it." At this

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Captain J. J. Scully, Secretary and National Organizer, September 26, 1935.

point he produced a constitution of the M. M. & P. A. by which all locals are governed. Among the other qualifications for membership, such as being a licensed worker, is the statement in Article II, Section 6, which begins: "He must be a white man. . . ."

**RAILWAY AND STEAMSHIP EMPLOYEES, BROTHERHOOD OF:**<sup>2</sup> A New York representative of this union, Mr. Pulliam, was very frank in stating that membership was limited by constitution to white persons. He asserted that such a move was not "willful discrimination" but an outgrowth of the time and place of origin of the union. "The constitution was drawn up 35 years ago in New Orleans, Louisiana," he said. "You can very well appreciate that situation. There were very few Negroes in railroad work of this kind. It was natural for the Southern white man to put 'white men' in the constitution. The Negro was not thought of as an important group." Further, he stated that Negroes had begun to push themselves into this work more and more since the World War and have since become "a problem." He also emphasized that he believes that the discriminatory attitude does not exist among the members at present. "To change the situation requires a change in the general constitution. Such a change can be effected only by a general convention and it seems that no craft in the Brotherhood will assume the responsibility and put forth the necessary pressure to get the constitutional amendment."

Experiences of local unions not barring Negro membership but, nevertheless, having only white members: Among the unions of this group are those that cover work in which Negroes are not engaged, those that set up membership qualifications which Negro workmen find difficult to meet, those to which Negroes have never applied for membership—ac-

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Mr. C. E. Pulliam, Representative, August 25, 1935.

ording to their officials—and those that subtly keep out Negro members through tacit understandings among the white members. There are 71 of these among the 224 whose officials were interviewed. Typical among these are the following:

**AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS OF AMERICA, Local 246—Shirt Makers—Cutters:**<sup>3</sup> As a representative of this union, Mr. E. Blake, business agent, was interviewed. Mr. Blake was quite unpleasant and unwilling to talk. After a short while, however, he agreed to disclose only formal facts. To that end he stated that the membership of the local was 200—no Negroes; that the initiation fee was \$52.50, payable before membership is granted; and that the dues were \$39.00 yearly, payable \$3.25 monthly. He emphasized the fact that the fees were high to limit the membership. As to the possibility of Negro membership in the future he exclaimed, "Who ever heard of Negro cutters? There aren't any of them. At least, they never applied to us for memberships." He frankly stated that this local had had no experience with Negro workers and did not expect to in the future. In the many shop strikes held from time to time no Negroes were involved. "We do not have any trouble with Negro strike breakers because they can't do the work."

**INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS AND CHAUFFEURS—Local 808—Railway Express Employees**<sup>4</sup>—organized in 1922 and composed of 2,000 members—no Negroes. This is a local of workers in one "shop", the Railway Express Agency. Its membership is made up of chauffeurs, helpers and garage men in the employ of this Agency. Since the policy and practice of the Agency is "no employment of Negroes", there are none in the union.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mr. E. Blake, Business Agent, August 5, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. Bizzo, Office Clerk, September 19, 1935.

**JOURNEYMEN BARBERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION, Local 3**—Journeyman Barbers: <sup>5</sup> Organized in 1934 and composed of 150 members, no Negroes. This local has jurisdiction over the barbershops in the downtown business section of Manhattan. In these shops no Negroes are employed; therefore, none can hold membership in this local.

**HOTEL AND RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES' INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE, Local 1—Waiters & Waitresses** <sup>6</sup>—This local claims to be the oldest waiters' union in New York. In fact, it is the founder of the H. R. E. I. A., of which it is now a local. Seven years after its origin in 1884 it founded the H. R. E. I. A. in 1891.

In Local 1 there are 2000 members, none of whom are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$15.00 and the dues, payable \$3.00 monthly, are \$36.00 yearly.

The local has had two general strikes—one in 1915 and one in 1930—and many individual hotel or restaurant strikes. In 1917 in one of these individual strikes—Lorber's Restaurant, located at Broadway & 40th Street—Negroes worked as strike breakers. They were supplied by an independent Negro waiters' Association—National Association of Head Waiters, located on Lenox Avenue. They broke this strike and continued to work at this restaurant until it went out of existence a few years ago.

A more recent case was the Hotel New Yorker strike in 1934. Negro waiters who were denied membership in Local 1 were used as strike breakers. They successfully broke the strike and still hold the jobs; however, Local 1 continues to refuse them membership.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Mr. A. Greenwald, Secretary-Treasurer, September 18, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with William Lehman, Secretary-Treasurer, September 18, 1935.

**HOTEL AND RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES' INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE, Local 3**—Bartenders<sup>†</sup>—organized in 1901 and composed of 1100 members of whom none are Negroes. As with Local 1 there never have been Negro members in this local. It is reported by the secretary that in March, 1933 three Negro bartenders from Harlem, the only place in which they find employment, went to him to ask the advisability of organizing a Negro local of bartenders. He told the men he thought there were too few of them to organize a local; however, if they wanted to try, he would give his full support in aiding them to get a charter. To this end he gave them a large number of application blanks so that they could get the required number of applicants to get a charter. "I haven't seen them since," he said. When asked why those men and their fellow workers were not invited to membership in Local No. 3, especially since they were too few to organize a local in the Harlem area, he remarked, "Ah, that would call for a lot of other considerations. I don't know whether our men would like that. Of course, though, we do not bar membership to anyone. Our constitution will tell you that." He was quite doubtful as to whether or not the union would in the future make any step toward taking these Negro bartenders into membership.

**INTERNATIONAL PRINTING PRESSMEN'S AND ASSISTANTS' UNION, Local 2**—New York Newspaper Pressman & Assistants<sup>‡</sup>—organized in 1923. To become a member of this local one must be employed as a pressman or assistant in some newspaper establishment in New York. As far back as the President could remember no Negro has been employed in such a capacity in New York; therefore, there are no Negroes in Local No. 2, which has 2,600 members. Membership is

<sup>†</sup> Interview with John Speciale, Secretary, September 9, 1935.

<sup>‡</sup> Interview with Andrew Armstrong, President, September 20, 1935.

open to any competent pressman or assistant regardless of race or color. The same holds true for apprenticeships; nevertheless, the local claims that no Negro youth ever applied for an apprenticeship. The term of apprenticeship is five years.

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES, Local 644**—Photographers of the Motion Picture Industry.\* This is another very small and exclusive local. It has a total membership of 170, none of whom are Negroes. It seems that the qualifications for membership make it very difficult for all except expert photographers who are financially well off to join. The initiation fee is \$1,000, payable \$500 when application is filed and \$500 when the candidate is admitted to membership. The yearly dues are \$72, payable \$6 monthly. The other qualification is that one must have made at least eight feature-length pictures before he applies. This local has had no experience with Negroes as applicants for membership.

Experiences of local unions with mixed memberships: Here the size of the Negro memberships depends upon the policy and attitude of the local unions, upon the number of Negro workers engaged in occupations under jurisdiction of such unions and upon the attitude of these Negro workers toward joining mixed locals. Therefore, because of the wide variations in these three factors Negro membership in mixed locals varies from one, in some locals, to a majority in others. Similarly, the experiences of local unions with mixed membership vary. On the one hand, there are the locals that accept as members merely the one or two Negro workers with whom they incidentally come in contact, while, on the other hand, there are those that provide special programs of organization to bring in Negro workers—a range

\* Interview with Mr. Downs, Business Representative, August 27, 1935.

from an indifferent or stolid attitude to a most friendly or encouraging one. Illustrative and typical of the 136 local unions in this group are the following samples:

INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION, Local 874—Commercial Checkers<sup>20</sup>—organized 1912. There is one Negro among 600 members of the union. He was admitted when the union was organized because "we found him working then and let him in." The joining fee is \$500 which must be paid in one lump sum before membership is granted. The yearly dues are \$18 payable \$1.50 monthly. The interviewer hinted that not many Negroes would be able to pay a joining fee of \$500. "We make this fee high and require that it is paid in one sum to protect the members of the union and to keep out undesirables." One officer said sharply, "Negroes don't do this kind of work. It is clerical and office work and they don't fit in. [The usual work is checking cargo and baggage at the piers.] It would be embarrassing to them and to the company because they come in contact with all classes of people on the piers, and you know what that means. Sometimes, they have to bundle the passengers' baggage, and the passengers don't want to be bothered with Negroes." The Negro member was once sergeant-at-arms in the local. From time to time, the local has had minor strikes in which he participated as a fellow unionist.

INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION, Local 791—General Longshore Workers<sup>21</sup>—organized 1902. Negroes were first admitted to membership in this local in 1925. Before that time they were affiliated with a completely separate Negro local, No. 875 of New York. "The steamship companies tried to exploit the colored workers,"

<sup>20</sup> Interview with officers of the local (names withheld), August 9, 1935.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Mr. Sampson, Delegate, September 12, 1935.



declared Mr. Sampson, "so we dissolved their local and made them members of local 791. That was about 1925, and they have been members—some off and on—since that time. We never had over 150 of them." The present initiation fee is \$10 and the dues, \$12 yearly, payable \$1 monthly.

Mr. Sampson explained that the union made no special efforts to organize Negro workers and implied that if it were not for their activity as strike breakers the union would probably not accept any of them. He said that while "the men will not accept the Negro as their social equal, they must accept him as their industrial equal" because they can do this type of work just as efficiently as anyone else. As a result of the recognition of this condition, they have taken the Negro into the union. As a union member he is supposed to be granted all the rights and privileges, etc. that go with membership; nevertheless, there are no Negro officers in this local. Mr. Sampson asserted that their lack of activity and their failure to attend meetings account in a large measure for their not holding any official positions in the local.

Referring back to Negroes' becoming members of the local, he further explained that every man desiring membership must make application at the local's office. When membership is granted, he is given a union button. Then, he must go down to the piers and try to get work from the contracting stevedores and foremen, who will not hire a man unless he has the union button. It is there that the chance for discrimination exists, for these foremen have a free hand in choosing whom they please from the men congregated on the piers.

Local 791 has had much experience with Negro strike breakers. In the coast-wide strikes of 1919, 1934, and during other years since the origin of the local in 1902, Negro

strike breakers were used by the companies with much success. Mr. Sampson charges that a Mr. ——— of the ——— detective Agency, an ex-police sergeant working with steamship company "gang leaders", was the man who furnished the Negro scabs from Harlem and transported them to the piers under police protection. He asserted that this Mr. ——— used to go to Harlem every morning and meet the Negro strike breakers at the Harlem subway stations and transport them in big moving vans to the piers. Through this activity the local lost many of the demands it had made of the employers. Such activity has also caused the white man "to realize that the Negro is his industrial equal" and to accept him, finally, in the union. "But," Mr. Sampson pointed out, "Negro strike breaking caused the development of the greatest possible racial antagonism. In the meetings when a colored man was up to be voted on for membership, we would get all sorts of evil expressions from the members. Many of them would say, 'We don't want niggers who scabbed on us'; 'Keep the ——— out.' After being persuaded that it was a protection to them, they usually voted the candidate in." Mr. Sampson pointed out also that he thought very few of those who had actually worked as scabs applied for membership. "Those who scab are nothing but hoodlums," he said. "They come down not so much to work as to steal what they can. The colored fellows in our union are quite different: they are the ones who want to do the right thing."

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF BOOKBINDERS, Local 119—Paper Cutters<sup>12</sup>—organized in 1902. Over the period of the last 25 years there have been two or three Negro members of Local 119. Until recently there were three, but when work became scarce, two dropped out of the union leaving the one who is now a member. The total member-

<sup>12</sup> Interview with W. Hutchinson, Secretary, September 20, 1935.

ship of the local is 800. Local 119 has at present no program regarding Negro labor; it never had. There is no need for such a program by Local 119 for the present procedure is the acceptance into membership of any competent Negro paper cutter found on the jobs in organized shops.

**INTERNATIONAL PRINTING PRESSMAN'S AND ASSISTANTS' UNION OF AMERICA, Local 23—Press Assistants**<sup>13</sup>—organized in 1884. When asked what he thought accounted for the fact that of a total membership of 2,000 only 7 were Negroes, the secretary-treasurer explained that Negroes find it hard to meet the requirements of membership. The required term of apprenticeship, four years, seems to be the greatest obstacle. This term must be served in an accredited shop, and if the employers will not hire Negro youths, the union can do little. No effort is being made by the local to get Negro membership. Although the Negro membership has been small, it has been continuous since 1900. There are two Negroes who are now on union pensions.

There was a strike in 1932 against an employer who discriminated. According to the story, the business of this shop decreased, making it necessary for the employer to lay off one of his men. The only Negro in the shop was picked. The union objected because it felt the decision was obviously discriminatory. To defend himself, the employer stated that the Negro worker was incompetent, but this excuse was not accepted because his record showed that he held the longest periods of service in the "tough" shops. A strike was called, the employer's mind was changed and the Negro union member was put back to work.

**INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS AND CHAUFFEURS, Local 816—Express and Trucking Workers**<sup>14</sup>—When this union was organized back in 1926, all

<sup>13</sup> Interview with James Gaven, Secretary-Treasurer, August 5, 1935.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Neal Sullivan, Business Agent, August 27, 1935.

workers had a chance to join. Everybody on the job when a company shop is organized is taken into the union. Since that time more Negroes have entered the union by the same means. Although the white membership fluctuated considerably, the number of Negroes has remained about the same. These members enjoy the privileges any other full members enjoy. The initiation fee is \$56 when individual application for membership is made. During membership campaigns or shop organization, special lower rates are granted. The yearly dues of \$24 are payable \$2 monthly. In the meetings Negro members are not so active although they do usually attend. Mr. Sullivan explains, "They are shy because they are outnumbered." There is, however, one Negro shop steward. "Our greatest difficulties come with the employers. If they won't hire the Negro workers, we can't force them to, but once the Negro gets in we can protect him," remarked Mr. Sullivan. One employer tried to fire the Negro worker recently, but "the union called a shop strike and the Negro worker is still there." This is characteristic of the relationship of Negroes to this local.

**BRICKLAYERS' MASONS AND PLASTERERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION, Local 34**—Bricklayers<sup>18</sup>—In 1892 the charter was taken from this union but in 1910 it reorganized and obtained a new charter. Ever since the reorganization some Negroes have been members of the union. At present, there are 100 among the total membership of 2,800. When there is a boom period in the building trades, many Negroes join the union, and when the work decreases, they drop out of the union. The initiation fee is \$100, payable in installments, and the dues are \$25 yearly. Most of the Negroes who are members are interviewed on the jobs by the union organizers and then brought into the union. As members,

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Andrew Baseen, Secretary, August 30, 1935.

the Negroes are very slow; they neither attend meetings regularly nor participate in the discussions when they do attend.

In 1932 there was a lockout and a reciprocal strike by the union. In both of these movements Negro members were very loyal and participated as fellow unionists. This action forms the basis for the "fine attitude" that exists among the members. However, the outlook for Negroes in this trade is not very bright according to the secretary.

**UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA, Local 257—Carpenters**<sup>16</sup>—Organized in 1919, this local has at present 700 members, 10 of whom are Negroes. Negroes have been members of the local since its organization, one or two being charter members. A great number came in through transfer from other locals, especially the Charleston, S. C. Negro local. In 1929 during the height of prosperity there were about 65 Negro members in this local. Since then—when the depression came along—most of them dropped out because they had no work and could pay no dues. Now only 10 remain. To qualify for membership one must be either a journeyman carpenter or a joiner who can pass a regular efficiency examination designed "to test solely the technical knowledge of the applicant" or else he must serve a four-year apprenticeship term.

**INTERNATIONAL HOD CARRIERS, BUILDING AND COMMON LABORERS' UNION, Local 102—Compressed Air Tunnel Workers**<sup>17</sup>—organized in 1892. "The relationship of the white and Negro members of the union is brotherly. All of our members are 100%." The vice-president of the local is a Negro, and one member of the Executive Board is a Negro. There are 216 other Negro members of the total

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Porges, Financial Secretary, October 2, 1935.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mathew Hannon, President, August 8, 1935.

membership of 842. The initiation fee of \$25 is payable in installments and the yearly dues of \$24 are payable \$2 monthly. While membership is open to all citizens of the United States, the local has adopted the policy of definitely excluding "any radical or Communist group". At one time the union was making definite efforts to organize Negro workers. To carry out this work it had three Negro organizers. Since that time, 1928-1929, two of the Negro organizers who were elderly men have died; the third, Joseph DeBouix, is still a union member now employed on the Versey Street Post Office Foundation.

In the 1916 strike the Negro union men stuck firmly, but a group of unorganized Negroes from Harlem went down and worked as strike breakers. These men were later organized, and now practically all of these old strike breakers are loyal members of this union. "They are just like brothers; they eat, drink, smoke and play cards together. We are broadminded and do not discriminate against anyone. We're all human beings, so what the hell's the use of discriminating." At present there is a Negro foreman, operating at the 38th Street tunnel, under whom are workers of many races.

INTERNATIONAL SEAMEN'S UNION OF AMERICA—Cooks and Stewards Union of the Atlantic & Gulf, Marine<sup>28</sup>—was organized in 1906. At that time and up to the great marine strike in 1921 the union was quite active, having a proportion of 3 Negroes to 1 white member. The strike of 1921 "ruined the union," but after reorganizing in 1922 the "Negro members became the backbone of the organization until 1935." Up to the beginning of 1935, ninety percent of the members were colored. About that time the International Seamen's Union signed an agreement with the

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Mr. Angle, Secretary, September 26, 1935.

steamship owners Association. Then, a great dissatisfaction among the members of the Marine Cooks', etc. arose. Mr. Angle stated, "The colored fellows separated into a colored branch because they wanted to and because we all thought it would be a better arrangement. So the colored boys went over to 72 Cortlandt Street, where they have the colored branch with colored officers, Martin and Allen."

It seems that when the union, with the aid of Administration leaders in Washington, forced this agreement with the steamship owners, its white membership increased tremendously because of the increased wages and new security which the agreement guaranteed the members. The total membership is now approximately 5,000, while the Negro membership is still about 2,000. The 3 to 1 proportion of Negroes to whites during the period 1906 to 1921 and the ninety percent Negro membership from 1922 to 1935 have been completely reversed. The white members have monopolized the work and caused the Negro workers to separate into a subsidiary body responsible to the "white union"; however, the initiation fee of \$10 and dues of \$1 monthly are the same for both groups. The two officers of the Negro branch are members of the Executive Board of the "white union." Interesting, however, is the fact that the president of the "white union" is a Negro, a British West Indian. When the union would have disbanded in 1921 after its failure in the strike, he worked untiringly to save it. His success brought him the presidency of the union in spite of its separation into Negro and white branches. The union had but one general strike, the Marine strike of 1921. In it the Negro members participated as fellow unionists. Although some unorganized Negroes and whites worked as scabs, this activity caused no racial antagonism, because "the Negro is responsible for us being here today; they stuck and still stick to the job when all others go."

FOOD WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION, Local 110—Cafeteria Workers<sup>29</sup>—Organized in 1929. This is an independent organization not affiliated with the A. F. of L. Regarding this union Mr. Kramberg, its secretary, pointed out, "We could not be a member of the A. F. of L. because we vary too much on policy regarding the admission and treatment of Negroes in our union. The A. F. of L. says that it does not discriminate against the Negro, but, in practice, it is a great exploiter of the Negro. We are now making special efforts to organize Negro workers in the food industry. In this local, we have a Negro general organizer, Manning Johnson, and he is a fine fellow, too. He is making wonderful progress." Of a total membership of 3000, there are 100 Negroes, most of whom have been made members since Johnson's appointment in January, 1935. Mr. Kramberg pointed out further that about 85 of the Negro members are unskilled workers—busboys, dish washers, cleaners, etc. "The problem of this union is to push the Negro worker to the front. We have the greatest difficulty in putting them in position like countermen and waiters where they have direct contact with the public. The people do not mind their working back in the kitchen." When Negroes get into the union and find that "the union is sincere in its attitude toward helping the Negro worker, they make the best members." There are Negroes on the Executive Board and on various committees of the union. "At first, though, the new Negro members are slow and awkward in the meetings. After a few meetings, when the union has proved itself to them, they become very active. Our task is hard because the Negro at first feels that he might just as well be discriminated against by the employers rather than by the union. When we break that attitude, our workers get along excellently," Mr. Kramberg added.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Mr. Kramberg, Secretary, August 8, 1935.



**HOTEL AND RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES' INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE, Local 302**—Delicatessen and Restaurant Counter-men<sup>20</sup>—Although this local was organized in 1911, Negroes were not admitted to membership until its jurisdiction was extended to cafeteria employees in 1929. When the union began to organize the cafeterias, it encountered many Negro employees—most of whom were working as dishwashers, kitchen helpers and porters. Since the policy of the local is to organize all workers when an establishment is "pulled", the Negroes were admitted to membership. There are about 500 Negroes in the total membership of 4500. About 400 of the Negro members are unskilled workers—porters, kitchen helpers, etc. The other hundred are cooks, helpers and two or three counter-men.

The Negro members are not very active. Said Mr. Epstein, president, "Although we encourage them to come out to meetings and take part, they are very slow to respond and seldom attend the meetings. That, too, explains why there are no Negro officers in the Local."

**MUSICIANS, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF, Local 802, New York Federation of Musicians.**<sup>21</sup> Of the activities of Negroes in this local one of its Negro business agents made several statements. He said, among other things, "I feel that the musicians' union has done more toward unionizing Negro workers than any other unions, but we still must do much toward making the Negroes in Harlem more union conscious. In this union we are given a fair deal and not discriminated against because of race, creed or color. We are just at present preparing to iron out a little difficulty with our Harlem members. It seems that some of the members have been cutting in on and underbidding other union men. That's because work is so scarce, and we have to

<sup>20</sup> Interview with T. Epstein, President, September 11, 1935.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ralph Redmon, Business Agent, October 18, 1935.

work for what we can get." The union does not send out men to the jobs. It establishes contact with the managements of the many hotels and amusement places and gets them to agree through contract to hire only union men and to pay union rates. Then, each individual worker or orchestra or group, as the case may be, must obtain his own work through applying for it. Union membership, then, merely gives one the privilege to work in certain places under good conditions, that is if he is able to obtain that work.

Organized in 1921, Local 802 has at present 15,300 members of whom 1,800 are Negroes. Its initiation fee, payable in one sum, is \$50 and its dues are \$16 yearly payable \$4 quarterly. Negroes have been members since the organization of the local. In fact, some of them are charter members. Most of them joined by direct application to the union's headquarters. Local 802 is a mixed local in which Negroes are supposed to be full members in every respect. Among the Negro officials of Local 802 are an Executive Board Member, two Business Agents and one Delegate.

Local 802 has held no general strikes. At all times there are individual theatre, hotel, cafe and other strikes for the establishment of union conditions. In many of these Negro union men have participated as fellow unionists, doing the usual picketing. Many other Negroes, who were unorganized, worked as strike breakers. White workers also worked as strike breakers—and in a greater proportion. Many of the Negro strike breakers were approached by union delegates and made members of the union. Among the plans of this union is the organization of musicians in Harlem night clubs. Already, pickets, Negro and white, can be seen around these clubs every night.

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES, Local 306—Motion Picture Machine Operators <sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Joseph D. Basson, President, August 23, 1935.

—organized in 1902. The very interesting early experiences of this local with Negro members in 1925 were discussed in detail in Chapter III. The situation today has changed considerably. Of the total membership of 1,840 20 are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$500 with dues of \$40 yearly. The officials say that Negroes now enjoy full membership in Local 306, participate in all of its meetings and activities and share any other duties which may fall upon them. But there are no Negroes officers in the local. At one time there was a Negro steward—a sort of district foreman whose activities were confined to the Harlem area. On the question of the distribution of jobs held by Negro operators it was noted that all of the Negro union members were employed in Harlem, the reason being that these men were employed in Harlem Theatres when they were organized and have therefore remained in the same theatres.

Interesting also, is the local's attempt to organize Negro workers in the Renaissance Theatre in Harlem. That theatre is being picketed, not because it does not employ Negro workers but because it does not employ organized workers of Local 306. The usual procedure is to call upon any unemployed member to do picket duty in any section of the city. In this case only Negro pickets are used. The prospect of organizing this theatre is doubtful because employees there continue to ignore the requests of the local and the public likewise ignores the presence of the pickets.

*INTERNATIONAL LADIES GARMENT WORKERS' UNION, Local 22—Dressmakers*<sup>28</sup>—organized in 1921. This is one of the locals of the I. L. G. W. U. in which the Negroes have made "wonderful progress." The local now has a membership of 30,000 of whom 3,000 are Negroes. Before the 1933 general strike of the I. L. G. W. U.—the organizational strike under N.R.A.—the membership of both white

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Nathan Margolis, Assistant Manager, August 20, 1935.

and Negro workers was small. From that time to the present the Negro membership has increased from 500 to 3000 and the white membership from 4000 to 27,000. "N.R.A. gave us the chance to organize and learn the advantages of organization. Now, we do not need to depend on it any longer. We have a more powerful weapon—the strike: in this connection, Negro workers are very loyal. There's no difference between them and the other workers." While the great majority of the Negro workers went into the unions through the organization of shops, many hundreds also gained union membership through direct application. So long as they met the qualifications, no difference was made. But in many cases for both white and Negro workers the initiation fees were reasonable and made payable in small installments. The membership committee, which passed on all applicants, arranged the payments to suit the ability of the applicants to pay. It was also shown that Negroes do not make a great effort to change from the unskilled to the more skilled crafts in the union after they are admitted. "But," said Mr. Margolis, "many of them are applying for membership as workers in the skilled crafts. At present, I would say that the crafts having the largest number of Negroes rank as follows: (1) finishers, (2) drapers, (3) operators, (4) cleaners and examiners and (5) pinkers. I can't give the exact numbers because no records by race or color are kept." The ranking for crafts paying the highest wages are: (1) operators and drapers, (2) finishers and examiners, and (3) cleaners and pinkers.

On the Executive Board of this local there are three Negroes—two of whom were delegates from Local 22 to the I. L. G. W. U. convention in Chicago in 1934. In addition to these officers, there are many Negro shop chair-ladies. Negro members are taking full advantage of the side benefits and medical care given to union members for an additional

fee of 35c monthly. Among these benefits are: two physical examinations yearly, a sick benefit of \$7 weekly for 10 weeks in the same year, a \$25 yearly sick relief if thereafter the illness continues and a \$300 T. B. benefit if tuberculosis is contracted during union employment.

In local and general strikes Negro members of Local 22 have participated only as fellow unionists.

INTERNATIONAL LADIES GARMENT WORKERS' UNION, Local 35—Cloak, Shirt and Dress Pressers<sup>24</sup>—organized in 1910 and composed of 5,000 members of whom 50 are Negroes. It was not until 1925 that Negroes gained membership in this union and not until 1933 that this membership began to increase. The greater number of the 50 Negro members entered the union after the advent of N.R.A., when the white membership also increased. The initiation fee of \$65 is conveniently arranged in installments suitable to the ability of each applicant to pay, and the dues of \$25 yearly, are payable 50c weekly. There is also in reference to membership qualifications an efficiency test which most, if not all, of the Negro workers who applied for membership or who were solicited for membership had no difficulty in passing. This local, however, has made no definite efforts to get Negro membership and has done nothing to encourage it. "At first," said the Assistant Manager, "Negroes are slow and green; they know nothing about unions." Further "discussion" brought out the fact that the union does nothing to educate its workers in the principles and methods of trade unionism. In spite of that, the workers finally learn the advantages of organization and then become good supporters of the union. The Negro membership of this local is not active to any great extent. No difficulties are encountered, however, in getting them to pay their dues and fees. In the meetings they are quiet and seldom make re-

<sup>24</sup> Interview with M. Kooler, Assistant Manager, August 20, 1935.

marks, that is, when they attend. They hold no offices—neither on the Executive Board nor on the shop committees. In the general strikes of the I. L. G. W. U. and the individual shop strikes of this local Negroes have participated as loyal fellow unionists. It is the feeling of Mr. Kooler that such activity tends to bring about a much friendlier and more brotherly relationship between the white and Negro workers.

AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS OF AMERICA, Local 248—Shirt Makers—Operators<sup>22</sup>—organized 1907. Mr. Sperandeo, business agent of the above named local was interviewed. He was quite free in his talk and opened the interview by stating that there are very few Negroes in his local (6 out of a membership of 1500) because they seem to prefer to go into another local of the shirt makers—the pressers. “They seem to work better as pressers,” he said, “because they can stand the heat. In our Elizabeth, N. J. plant, for example, the majority of the workers are Negroes. They also work in the laundries. They very seldom apply to us for membership. Those who are now members came through the organization of a shop in which they were working.” There are only a few Negroes in the local although no bars whatsoever are put up to prevent their joining, and after they join, they get the full benefit and protection of the union. Mr. Sperandeo stated further, “Before we organized the Negroes in those shops, the employers were paying them less and making them work harder. Since then, they get what the other workers who are union members get.”

No special efforts are exerted to increase the number of Negro members. In the meetings the Negro members are usually quiet—when they go—and quite inactive. None of them hold office because they are “too few and too inactive.”

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mr. Sperandeo, Business Agent, August 7, 1935.

In the general strikes of the Operators' local 248 in 1932, '27, '23 and '19 and in the constant shop strikes—all of which were called for either organization or improvement of working conditions—Negroes—those in the union and those in non-union shops—participated as fellow-unionists. Mr. Sperandeo expressed the opinion that in the future Negroes will become no more active in the operators union than at present. They will, he believes, continue to go into the pressers' local.

**PUBLIC RELIEF AGENCIES, ASSOCIATION OF WORKERS IN:**<sup>26</sup> This Association is the outcome of a reorganization of the Home Relief Bureau Employees' Association organized in 1933. In August, 1935 the jurisdiction of the union was extended to cover administrative workers in all public relief agencies—as its name indicates. Incorporated in the preamble to its constitution, among other declarations, is the phrase, "embracing in its membership all rank and file employees, barring none on the grounds of racial, political or religious discrimination." Membership is limited, however, to workers of and below the status of administrative aid or workers not having the power to discharge or to recommend the discharge of other workers.

The Association, organized into 52 district locals, includes 7000 members of whom about 1000 are Negroes. Each district local has its own executive committee, exercises autonomy in local affairs and sends representatives, proportionate to its district local membership, to the city-wide Delegates Assembly. Final decisions in the Association are determined by the vote at city-wide membership meetings. Between meetings the Delegates Assembly, which meets monthly, exercises jurisdiction. Between meetings of the Delegates Assembly the Executive Board, meeting weekly, is empowered to make all necessary decisions.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Bernard L. Riback, Executive Secretary, November 12, 1935.

In district locals of workers in district offices of the Home Relief Bureau where large numbers of Negroes work—especially in district offices 24, 26, 28, 31, 32 and 33 which are located in the Harlem area—and in Division 4 of the Unattached and Transient Bureau, Negroes are very active members, holding in some cases the executive positions of chairman, recording secretary and treasurer. In the city-wide central organization they are not as well represented in executive offices. At the time of this survey there were five Negroes on the Executive Board of thirty, the policy forming and governing body of the Association.

The Association has had one stoppage and several "protest marches" but no strikes. On Thursday, October 24, 1935 the Association called a three-hour stoppage in protest against the announced cut in the administrative staff of the Emergency Relief Bureau. In it many Negro members participated as fellow unionists by quitting while other members remained on the job. The same thing occurred, however, with the white members.

The most recent move of the Association has been its successful effort to affiliate itself with the American Federation of Labor.

**METAL WORKERS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, SHEET, Local 28—Sheet Metal Workers** <sup>27</sup>—Local 28 was organized in 1885. At present it has 1550 members, 6 of whom are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$140 payable in installments; the dues are \$46 yearly payable \$3.65 monthly. Unless one is a journeyman metal worker, he must serve an apprenticeship of five years before he can gain membership.

Practically all of the Negro members entered the union through direct application to the union office. The reason for the small Negro membership is that there are so few Negroes in this trade. None of the officers of the union are Negroes.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Mr. Thomas, Secretary, September 25, 1935.



BUILDING SERVICE EMPLOYEES' INTERNATIONAL UNION, Local 32B—General Building Service Workers—Mr. Planson, Secretary-Treasurer, spoke of conditions in this local.<sup>28</sup> "Very soon after we organized local 32B in April, 1934," he began "we realized that Harlem was a problem within itself. The poor workers in that section were making such low wages, \$10 and \$12 a month for some superintendents who got part rent, that we set up the Harlem Council of Local 32B to see what could be done. Why, we couldn't expect those poor people to spend ten cents subway fare to come to meetings downtown after they have worked twelve or fourteen hours." Since the origin of the local its membership has grown so rapidly that the local has found it necessary to divide the city into district councils. Each Council is composed of the members of the union who work in that district and has direct control of such workers.

At present Local 32B has an approximate membership of 31,800 of whom 9,000 are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$4 and the dues \$12 yearly payable \$1 monthly. This is a mixed local in which all members have equal power and privileges. There are two Negro members of the Executive Board and a Negro vice-president. There are no separate locals or councils for Negroes, and all meetings are mixed.

The chairman of the Harlem Council of Local 32B described its activities.<sup>29</sup>

"I saw the need for this council long ago," he said, "and convinced the officers of Local 32B that it should be set up." On April 19, 1924, a charter was granted and the council was thereby officially established. Mr. McLeod was made chairman and Mr. Logan secretary. Mr. McLeod emphasized that the council was set up to facilitate the organizing and conducting of meetings of Harlem building service em-

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Mr. Planson, Secretary-Treasurer, September 16, 1935.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with C. McLeod, Chairman, September 14, 1935.

ployees. It was not, he said, a means of putting all the Negro building service employees in a subsidiary body responsible to a white local; in reality, however, the Harlem Council is such a body, although it is responsible to a mixed local. The jurisdiction of the council is determined geographically; therefore, there are in its membership both Negro and white workers.

The council carries on an extensive organization program. It employs two Negro and two white organizers. In addition to the personal contacts that it makes with workers in the unorganized apartments the council fosters mass meetings and organization campaigns and distributes literature, telling the workers of the advantages of union membership and urging them to join. That these efforts have been effective is evidenced by the great increase in membership and by the strength of the union in getting its demands granted by the apartment owner's agencies through its strikes.

All of the business dealing with the Harlem section of Manhattan is done through the Council. At the meetings the members decide upon their proposals, etc.; these are in turn presented to the Executive Board of Local 32B by the two Executive Board members from the Harlem Council. On the Executive Board there are 16 members; nevertheless, Mr. McLeod asserted that he has no difficulty in putting through his proposals. "It would be impossible," he said, "to have a meeting of all the members of Local 32B at the same time in one place because there is no place large enough to hold them. That is why we have our district council meetings and then work through our Executive Board members." It is interesting to note here that until very recently—just a few months ago—there was but one district council of the Local 32B, the Harlem Council. The new plan, however, has divided the Local into eight councils, each

having the privilege of electing two Executive Board members.

Since its organization the Harlem Council has had one general strike for the Harlem district—the strike that began February 13, 1935. During the first few days of this strike, which was called to demand higher wages for the workers, the Council had some difficulty with white and Negro scabs who were practically all unorganized workers. Officers of the council appealed for help to a meeting of a division of Local 32B at the Rockland Palace, 155th Street and 8th Avenue. "Hardly before we could breathe," said Mr. McLeod, "over 1,000 of the white members had come to our meeting from all sections of the city. With their aid in picketing, we soon won the strike." In addition to this general strike the council has had numerous individual apartment house misunderstandings between the workers and employers, when the employers wanted union members to work for less than the union wage scale or longer than the set hourly scale. Most of these were settled by some representative—usually an organizer of the council. Others were presented to the Conciliation Board of New York City, and satisfactory decisions were reached.

LAUNDRY WORKERS INTERNATIONAL UNION, Local 280—Laundry Workers<sup>20</sup>—In 1933, this local set out to organize the Negro laundry workers in New York. To do so it distributed literature and got in touch with the workers through special organizational committees composed of both Negro and white workers. Their efforts were successful, and in 1933 Negro membership began in this local which had been organized in 1921. "Great strides have been made by the Negro workers," stated Miss Taft, financial secretary. "We now have 400 Negroes—50% of our total—and sev-

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Miss Jessie Taft, Financial Secretary, and Samuel Berland, Business Agent, September 3, 1935.

eral of them are officers." The vice-president, a trustee and two Executive Board members are Negroes. There are many shop chairladies and shop committeemen. The union also has a grievance board to which all complaints are taken. In its membership of five are two Negroes. In many cases this board has satisfactorily settled misunderstandings among workers and at times between the employer and Negro workers when the former attempted to abuse his employees with unkind words or to add to their work.

The proportion of Negro workers in the various crafts of the laundry work are about as follows:—family ironers (hand workers)—95%; washers, pullers and hangers—80%; mangle workers (work with the steam rollers)—50%; pressing machine operators—30%; and shirt folders—10%.

The union has called many strikes for the purpose of improving working conditions and "closing" shops. In these strikes Negroes have participated as fellow unionists, strike breakers and non-union workers in plants. After Negroes were admitted to membership, they were "loyal in times of strikes." Others, however, who were not union members, served as strike breakers. The union charged that such agencies as the Harlem branch of the New York State Employment Service at 200 West 135th Street have supplied strike-breaking labor. In many cases they do this not knowing of the strike because employers hire workers for other laundries and then take them in cars and trucks to the laundry where the strike is in progress. In still other cases a few Negroes who were working in laundries or shops when the union attempted to "close" them would not strike with the union. As an outcome of all of these strikes, however, most of the Negroes participating as strike breakers were organized and made members of the union. It seems that these strike experiences have brought the workers closer together.

Local 290—Laundry Workers<sup>82</sup>—Of equal interest and importance are the conditions in Local 290. In it Negroes compose the majority of the membership—60% or 150 of the 250 members. Similarly, they are well represented in the executive positions of the union as the vice-president, the treasurer, 14 members of the Executive Board of 40 and an organizer are Negroes. These officials are very active, all participating in the usual business affairs of the local, especially in the negotiations with employers for employer-union agreements. The members are very active, too, attending meetings, serving on committees and showing other trade-union interest despite the fact that their short experience in unions has not yet taught them the full value and principles of trade unionism. The Negro organizer, Noah C. Walter, who is also an executive officer of the Negro Labor Committee, commented, "The industry at present is in perfect harmony; there is no dissension. I have been to no meeting yet where there has been any expression made to reflect discrimination or segregation or anti-Negro feeling."

**NEWSPAPER GUILD, AMERICAN:** Newspaper Guild of New York.<sup>83</sup> About the most interesting post-NRA occurrence in the organized labor movement affecting Negroes in Manhattan was a labor dispute in which this union played a prominent part. A review of the facts or events leading up to Negro membership in this union and to the subsequent labor dispute is in order here.

The American Newspaper Guild was organized in November, 1933 as a result of the efforts of newspaper workers stimulated by N.R.A. to organize. The New York

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Noah C. Walter, Organizer, September 20, 1935.

<sup>83</sup> Except when otherwise indicated all information about these activities came from interviews with Carl Randau, President, Ted Poston, Chairman of the *New York Amsterdam News* Unit, and several members of the Guild. Much of the additional information was obtained by the author through personal observation.

unit of the Guild, the Newspaper Guild of New York, was organized at the same time. Neither the national parent organization, A. N. G., nor any of its locals or units is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor; however, the parent organization is at present considering the advisability of affiliating.

Membership in this union is open to all editorial workers and their assistants regardless of the paper they serve or of their color, race or creed. The total membership of the New York unit is 2,100 of whom 30 are Negroes. It was in July, 1934 when Negroes first became members "by application on their own free will to the New York Guild". These first members, 19 of them, were all employees of the New York *Amsterdam News*, a Negro weekly. They represented the entire editorial staff of that paper, but the shop was not "closed" because the employers refused to recognize the union. Later, Negro workers on other papers, among them the *Negro Liberator* and the *New York News*, also applied for membership and joined the union, increasing its Negro membership to the present figure of 30. The union has no Negro executive officers; however, there are two Negro members of the Representative Assembly, both employees of the New York *Amsterdam News*. Other Negro members of the Guild take an active part in the general meetings of all units and in the general activities of the Guild.

The New York Guild has never had a general strike, but on several occasions there have been individual newspaper unit strikes. In these the Negro members proved themselves to be "good members." "In a unit strike in Newark, N. J., they participated excellently. Every night someone from the *Amsterdam News* was at the strike headquarters."

A similar individual newspaper strike or lockout was that of the New York *Amsterdam News* unit. In August, 1935 this unit began negotiations with the management of the

paper for union recognition. It did not seek a wage increase, but merely a contract that would guarantee its members greater security in their jobs. The result of these continued efforts was the lockout of the whole editorial department, which included 15 members of the *Amsterdam News* unit of the New York Newspaper Guild. Immediately the Guild set up strike headquarters for the *Amsterdam News* Unit, sent scores of members from other units to do picket duty and financed the eleven weeks' dispute. This financing included the payment of salaries of locked-out employees and the bearing of other costs of the fight for reinstatement of the members. The fact that the dispute was between Negro workers and Negro employers was incidental but yet significant. It immediately threw into the realm of ancient history the former attitude of Negroes that Negro workers should not fight against Negro employers. That the employers were Negroes made a difference to neither the Guild nor to its Negro members; the fight was waged just as it might have been against the New York *World Telegram*, the New York *Times* or any other of the big New York newspapers. It was just an issue of employer fighting employee and vice versa.

The presence of white members, including Heywood Broun, president of the American Newspaper Guild and famous columnist for the New York *World Telegram*, on the picket line before the publisher's office of this Negro weekly in the heart of Harlem, together with the continued appeals of the locked-out workers, aroused in the public an inexplicable consciousness of the sincerity of the Guild in these activities and a greater appreciation which expressed itself in contributions to the "lock-out fund" and in volunteer picket duty by outstanding Negro citizens—ministers, lawyers, school teachers, social workers, doctors and others—and representatives of the many civic, social and economic

organizations of the community. Moreover, the public as a whole began boycotting the paper by not purchasing it; the big businesses of the area did likewise by not advertising in it. On two occasions the pickets were arrested for disorderly conduct. For their protection the guild furnished prompt legal aid and bail money. In the face of all this the management of the paper nevertheless refused to negotiate. Finally, suffering from loss of circulation, the paper was forced into the hands of a receiver and was later sold to two prominent Negro doctors of Harlem. In the meantime, the dispute was ended and the workers reinstated. Other conditions of the agreement were the discharge of the strike-breaking staff, the establishment of a guild shop with full-time employment for nine of the locked-out employees, a five-day forty-hour week, annual vacations of two weeks, dismissal notices of up to three months for ten years' employment, creation of an adjustment committee and assurance against strike breaking and discrimination.

The settlement of the dispute was hailed by the organized labor movement and by private citizens. The significance of the whole affair is expressed in part in the felicitations sent to the victors. Among these were the following:<sup>22</sup>

FRANK CROSSWAITE, Chairman, Negro Labor Committee—  
"I congratulate the people of Harlem whose loyalty to the organized workers of the *Amsterdam News* during eleven weeks of struggle has won this signal victory. Thus once more demonstrating the power of right over wrong. Also I congratulate the new Management of the *Amsterdam News* upon their enlightened stand in recognizing the right of their employees to collective bargaining and lastly, I congratulate the heroic locked out workers of the editorial department who have written a most creditable new page in the story of Negro labor."

<sup>22</sup> The New York *Amsterdam News*, December 28, 1935.



JOHN L. LEWIS, president of the United Mine Workers of America—"Victory of the Newspaper Guild in the lockout on the *Amsterdam News* is a triumph for organization in the newspaper world. I join in expressing personal pleasure and gratification in the accomplishment."

MRS. GERTRUDE E. AYER, Principal of P. S. 24—"The reinstated staff of the *Amsterdam News* is to be congratulated on winning the respect of the entire city by its gallant fight. May its pen prove mightier in the cause of labor, for it now writes not only with words alone, but the conviction of experience."

REV. ADAM C. POWELL, JR., pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church—"At the beginning of the strike I said that the cause of right would be victorious. The recognition of the Guild proves this, and because of the reorganization of the paper with union workers we can now look forward to a real, militant, sincere journal of Harlem life."

ELMER A. CARTER, editor, *Opportunity Magazine*—"It would be inaccurate to say that the victory of the locked out employees of the *Amsterdam News* is a victory of the Newspaper Guild alone. It is in truth a victory for the citizens of Harlem who recognized the fundamental right of the worker to organize for his own security. I congratulate the new management of the *Amsterdam News* for its progressive outlook. I express my appreciation to the New York City Guild organization for its splendid cooperation which made this victory possible."

RETAIL CLERKS' INTERNATIONAL PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION, Local 721—Hat & Furnishing Salesmen<sup>24</sup>—At present, this local is working in cooperation with the Negro Labor Committee in an effort to organize the stores on 125th Street in the Harlem area where the only Negro salesmen under its jurisdiction are employed. They have succeeded in organizing one store in which one Negro is employed. He was forthwith made a member of the union, and has

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ben Krasner, Business Manager, October 4, 1935.

for the last four months been a "good member". As an inducement to Negro salesmen to join the union a special initiation fee of \$15 and dues of \$36 have been established. This arrangement is only a temporary organizational plan which does not limit the privileges or benefits of Negroes as union members in any way.

**RETAIL CLERKS' INTERNATIONAL PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION, Local 1268—Retail Shoe Salesman**<sup>22</sup>—This local has just completed some organizational work in a Blyn Shoe Store on West 125th Street, in which one Negro clerk was employed. Having interviewed each salesman in this store and invited him to join the union, the local pulled an organizational strike, after which this Negro clerk was made a member. There are at present 200 members, 1 of whom is a Negro. The Secretary-Treasurer explained that the reason for the Local's not having Negro members since its organization in 1929 was that most of its activity had been confined to the business section of Manhattan, excluding the 125th Street section. The Blyn Shoe Company is a chain store concern with one store on 125th Street. "You couldn't imagine a Negro shoe salesman in any other section of the City, and it is our policy to take in the local only people who are actually employed when applying for membership."

Experiences of Negro locals of national or international unions: It is quite uncommon to find in New York the practice widely prevalent in the South—organization of Negro workers into separate Negro locals; nevertheless, there are three locals of this type among those included in this study. In one case an international union has extended its jurisdiction to cover a craft at which only Negroes worked; in the other two there is a separation of Negro and white workers of the same crafts. How these originated and how they function today is shown in remarks made by their officers.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with L. M. Simon, Secretary-Treasurer, September 16, 1935.

**HOTEL AND RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES' INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE, Local 370—Dining Car Employees**<sup>86</sup>—organized in 1935. Although not officially designated as a completely separate Negro local, it is one in reality, for its founders and charter members were Negroes, its total membership—at present 150—has always been Negro and its officials and representatives are Negroes. In only one city, Chicago, is there a mixed local of Dining Car Employees, Local 551. The other locals are Local 582 of Los Angeles, Local 354 of St. Louis and Local 394 of Washington—all of which were organized within the past few years. The initiation fee of Local 370, the New York Local, is \$3.50 and the dues are \$15 yearly, payable \$1.25 monthly.

Local 370 has four organizers working very hard to organize the residents of New York who are employed in the dining car service. "We had no trouble getting a charter, but the men are hard to organize. They are very much opposed to affiliation with the A. F. of L. (through the H. & R. E. I. A.) because they feel it will not give them a fair deal, and they base this attitude on the fact that Negroes in some other occupations like the building trades, have often been replaced by white A. F. of L. union men." The Dining Car Employees could not organize as a Federal Negro Local as against the present status of Negro local responsible to white International—because the A. F. of L. claimed that the Hotel & Restaurant Employees already had jurisdiction over that territory. The H. & R. E. I. A. would not relinquish its jurisdiction over this field because it realized the great possibility for its future development. In New York alone there are about 1200 dining car employees, "and 1200 \$1.25's a month is something to think about."

The greatest opposition to the development of Local 370 was an independent Negro union, The Brotherhood of Din-

<sup>86</sup> Interview with H. H. Henry, Secretary, October 29, 1935.

ing Car Employees, which operates over the same group of workers that Local 370 covers. It is alleged that this organization is in fact a company union and that its officials still follow the same old "back-door tactics" used at the time of its origin about fifteen years ago. This opposition has been removed by the selection of Local 370 as the representative of dining car employees for purposes of collective bargaining with their employers in the recent ballot taken by the National Mediation Board (see Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees below). In the meantime, however, Local 370 has continued its attempts to get the H. & R. E. I. A. to relinquish its jurisdiction over dining car employees so that it may be able to join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the first step toward the formation of a great Negro trainmen's association.

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PAVERS, RAMMERMEN, FLAG LAYERS, BRIDGE AND CURB STONE SETTERS AND SHEET ASPHALT PAVERS, Local 92—Asphalt Block Layers." A Negro local of a white international union, this local was organized in 1925, as a "protective measure for the Negro asphalt block layers." Prior to that time, Negroes had been members of a mixed local which they dominated for a long time. Later, this local was "captured" by Italians; consequently, the Negro workers withdrew their memberships and established the above named local in 1925. From 1925 to about 1932 the union functioned perfectly. Its members enjoyed the high prevailing wage rates of the time and worked the number of hours set by the union. In fact, so well did it function that it was never necessary to call any strikes, either for improvement of working conditions or because of discriminatory practices. The local remained totally Negro. Since 1933 asphalt block laying work has gradually decreased as the tenseness of the depression in-

<sup>87</sup> Interview with J. Hobbs, President, September 10, 1935.

creased. At present all of the 28 members of local 92 are unemployed. Its president describes the situation thus: "We are unemployed because the private concerns are not having any work done and because the city is doing its own work. It buys the blocks and uses relief workers to do the work."

**BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA, Local 1888 — Carpenters** <sup>88</sup> — Local 1888 was organized March 6, 1916 as a mixed local of the U. B. of C. & J. of A. Its present total membership—all Negro—is 65. Its initiation fee, the same as in other locals, is \$30 payable in installments. Yearly dues are \$24 payable \$2 monthly.

Speaking of the origin of Local 1888, one officer stated, "The United Brotherhood granted us a charter to prove that no discrimination existed. We organized as a mixed local having colored and white members." His other remarks showed, however, that the whites soon dropped from the membership, and the local became entirely Negro although it is officially a "mixed local". On this point another said, "We do not believe in Negro Locals. We can't cry 'no segregation' when we try to segregate ourselves in separate locals."

As the years passed the local grew rapidly. In 1926 there were about 440 members. It was then that the local applied to the district council of New York locals for a Business Agent. The district council always put aside this request on the ground that other locals already had jurisdiction over this area—upper Manhattan. "The D. C.'s verdict on giving us a Business Agent was 'You can't have him because there is no room for him—no territory not covered already by a Business Agent.' Yet, when the locals manned by whites asked for a Business Agent, the D. C. would always

<sup>88</sup> Interview with J. B. Brockington, Vice-President, and other officers, October 26, 1935.

find some way of dividing the territory if it was covered by another local."

The officers feel that the greatest fallacy in the "no discrimination" policy, written or verbal, of the Brotherhood's district council of New York lies in the unwillingness to give Local 1888 a Business Agent—because it is mainly through this agent that work is secured and men are placed on the jobs. Because of this situation in Local 1888—no Business Agent—"men from other locals got jobs on projects up here in Harlem while we walked around without work." Continuing, they stated that "not one Negro carpenter worked on the Bronx Terminal Market on 149th Street and very, very few on the Y. M. C. A. on 135th Street or on the Harlem Hospital." Because of this absence of power on the part of the union the interest of the members waned and the 440 members dwindled to the present 65; yet, the local is still struggling for some status among the others.

Experiences of Negro federal locals: In 1919 the American Federation of Labor provided for the organization of those Negro workers who could not obtain membership in the unions of their trades into federal locals—local unions directly affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. As in the case of the separate Negro locals of national or international unions, very few of these were set up in New York. The following was the only one found in the course of this survey.

**BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS AND MAIDS,** Local 18068 A. F. of L. In its continued effort to combat the opposition offered by the Pullman Company supported union of Pullman porters and maids—the Pullman Porters' and Maids' Protective Association—the Brotherhood sought from the federal District Court of Northern Illinois an injunction restraining the Pullman Company from the con-

tinuation of its plan of employee representation.<sup>39</sup> This effort was unsuccessful. However, after a thorough investigation of the conditions the National Mediation Board ordered an election to take place on May 27, 1935. At this time the porters and maids were to decide whom they wanted to represent them—the Brotherhood or the company union. It was then that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids won a brilliant, far-reaching and significant victory, the vote being six thousand to fourteen hundred, against the company union.<sup>40</sup> The Brotherhood, an American Federation of Labor affiliate, receiving certification by the Board on July 1, 1935, became the duly authorized representative of the sleeping car porters and maids for the purpose of collective bargaining.<sup>41</sup> Thereupon, the Brotherhood drew up an agreement involving wages, hours, etc.—and proposed the same to the Pullman Company, which after thoroughly examining the terms, rejected it flatly. Again on October 5, 1935 the services of the National Mediation Board were invoked to settle the dispute resulting from this complete rejection of the agreement.<sup>42</sup> At the time of writing action on the case is still pending. In the meantime, the Brotherhood, then a federal local of the A. F. of L., had again applied for an international charter in 1935, and the matter was referred to the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. for consideration. That action, too, is pending at the time of writing.

The present status of the New York Local 18068 was given by its National Secretary-Treasurer,<sup>43</sup> who stated that

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Ashley L. Totten, National Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, October 7, 1935.

<sup>40</sup> Report of the *Proceedings*, American Federation of Labor, Fifty-fifth Annual Convention, 1935, pp. 609-910.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Ashley L. Totten, National Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, October 7, 1935.

the New York Local has 1458 members, all of whom, of course, are Negroes. During the pre-depression years the total membership was much greater. The fall in the amount of employment has caused a decrease in the number of sleeping car employees and, in turn, in the membership of the B. S. C. P. The initiation fee is \$10.50 and yearly dues of \$18 are payable \$1.50 monthly. Membership in the local is open only to persons doing the work of pullman porters, pullman maids or persons having a similar classification, e. g. attendants.

Mr. Totten sees an extremely bright outlook for the union. He stated that when it becomes international in scope and jurisdiction, other groups, such as the "red caps", "pullman car cleaners", etc. will affiliate with it. He estimates that the membership of the international will probably be about 200,000 strong and that the New York local, having both the Grand Central Terminal and the Pennsylvania Terminal under its control, will probably be the largest local. "When we do things, then," remarked Mr. Totten, "we'll do them in a big way."

Neither the New York Local nor the Brotherhood had any strikes.

Experiences of independent Negro unions—Although independent Negro unions have proved to be ineffective devices for dealing with problems of wages, hours and conditions of labor—mainly because of their lack of strength and power caused by their separation from the great masses of other organized workers and from the organized labor movements of the country—there still remain in Manhattan a few such unions. In one there is bitter opposition to the American Federation of Labor on the ground that affiliation with it would offer nothing to the union. Among the workers of another union discussed below there is a difference of opinion regarding affiliation with the American Federation of Labor.



The actual experiences of the two as outlined by their officers explain their positions on this issue.

**DINING CAR EMPLOYEES, BROTHERHOOD OF:** The status of the union in this early post-NRA period is suggested below by statements issued by its president, Rienzi B. Lemus.<sup>46</sup>

New York City is the home of two locals of the National Organization of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees, Local 1 and Local 3. The memberships are 450 and 400, respectively, with practically all members residents of Manhattan. The initiation fee and dues, which are uniform for all locals, are \$5 and \$12 per year, respectively. Local 1 was organized in 1920 and Local 3 in 1919.

Opening his remarks, Mr. Lemus stated, "This is a national independent railroad union, recognized by the railroad companies and by the big four railroad brotherhoods. In fact, it runs parallel with them". He pointed out that the union is organized along industrial lines, taking as members all workers used in the dining car service.

"I want to state emphatically," continued Mr. Lemus, "that we are not affiliated with the A. F. of L. just as the big Brotherhoods are not. We haven't got anything to gain by affiliation. Like the Brotherhoods, we don't want to get tied up in sympathetic strikes because train service is continuous and must go on. Each of the Brotherhoods is a sovereign union itself, and the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees is also a sovereign union. However, an A. F. of L. organization, Local 370, Dining Car Employees of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers International Alliance, has since 1934 been trying to gain sole jurisdiction over the employees in dining cars. It has no agreement with any of the railroad companies, but we've had an agreement with the New York Central Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Rienzi B. Lemus, President, November 2, 1935.

so long that it's ancient history now. If the National Mediation Board decided to take a secret ballot of the workers on whom they want for the legal organization, we have nothing to worry about; that would be the fair way to settle this dispute."

It developed that the National Mediation Board did order a secret vote on this question. By a vote of 793 to 193 the dining car employees of the Pennsylvania Railroad have chosen Local 370, the American Federation of Labor union, to represent them in dealing with the employers.

**STATION ATTENDANTS OF GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL, BROTHERHOOD OF:** For completeness of the service rendered to passengers on railroad trains it is necessary to have freight and baggage handlers, station employees and a host of other workers. Among these falls the group known as "red caps". Some organizational work has been done among these workers. The organizer of the above named union gave a few notes on the progress of this organization.<sup>48</sup>

Realizing that the union that accepted employees of this terminal as members, the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees, did not admit Negroes to its membership because of a constitutional exclusion of them, Mr. Williams set out to organize the red caps. "It was during the time of the N.R.A.," he pointed out. "When the amendment to the Railway Labor Act—Section No. 2 which gave us practically the same protection as Section 7A of N. I. R. A. gave the manufacturing and industrial workers—was passed in June, 1934, I immediately got busy because we were protected. It was an extremely difficult job to attempt organization of these men. Prior to this attempt one other was made in 1917. It was chartered by the A. F. of L. as a Federal local, but the charter was revoked because the union failed to keep

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Earl A. Williams, Organizer, December 12, 1935.

up its obligations." Before making his efforts, however, Mr. Williams consulted William Collins, New York representative of the A. F. of L., on the advisability of such an organization. He quoted Mr. Collins as saying that his greatest objection to new efforts to organize red caps grew out of his experience with them. "They never knew how to help themselves—were like babies—didn't have enough fight and were slow to let someone else help them out." These remarks from Collins did not discourage Williams, who proceeded to organize the workers.

According to Mr. Williams the type of men making up the red cap group made organizational work hard. The Railway Company is very careful in selecting the men, that is, it tries to get fairly intelligent men because they have to direct passengers, give information and in general, make the passengers "comfortable and satisfied." Because of this care taken by the company and because of the fact that many of the men can do no better, there are among the red caps, many students—"some studying law, some medicine and some general college work."

The most discouraging factor to the red caps was the absolute insecurity of their jobs. "They could keep their jobs as long as they could get along with the station supervisory employees—which meant taking a hell of a lot. If any passenger became displeased for any reason, all he did was take the red cap's number and report him. That was all for that man; he was just gone." The officials also had little consideration for these workers because they could very easily replenish their supply. "Even during the depression they wouldn't even reduce the number of red caps but required a lot of us to be on hand although the number of passengers dropped. Things got so bad at one time that it was the expression among the fellows that 'there's a red cap for each passenger', and as this passenger only gave you a dime, there you were."

These and many other deplorable conditions among the red caps in the Grand Central Terminal spurred the initial steps in the organization of the Brotherhood of Station Attendants of Grand Central Terminal which occurred in November, 1934. At present this union has a membership of 273 which represents about 70% of the total number of regular red caps—400. These 273 include about 38 of the terminal's 45 regular Negro employees—salaried men on the job. At first there was no initiation fee, but at present there is one of \$2. The dues are fifty cents monthly.

This is an independent Negro union not affiliated with the A. F. of L. Mr. Williams explained that he urged the men to make application to the A. F. of L. for a charter "because I feel that we should affiliate with the recognized labor movement of the land." Attempting to have his point emphasized, he had A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and outstanding Negro pro-A. F. of L. labor leader today, speak at one of the meetings. This made little impression on the men. Another meeting was addressed by Rienzi B. Lemus, President of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees and great Negro anti-A. F. of L. labor leader today. His message carried great weight with the red caps. Opposition to affiliation with the A. F. of L. came mainly from the older men. Apparently, they felt that the A. F. of L. had given them a bad deal in revoking their charter years ago when they first organized; an objection that was probably groundless because they had failed to keep up the per-capita tax of the A. F. of L. In the second place, they feel that affiliation with the A. F. of L. means that they must always strike in sympathy with other A. F. of L. unions. To them this is a dangerous step because their work is highly unskilled and they can be replaced almost simultaneously with their quitting—hence, the great fear of losing their jobs.

In spite of this "set back" the union is "somewhat progressing." It has negotiated with the railroad company for union recognition but has not reached any agreement yet. The company has not refused to recognize it as a union; it has merely continuously put off a consideration of the matter. "We are now pressing them for a definite stand so we can determine our future action. On the other hand the union has made at least one definite gain—it has made the men feel more secure—that they could at least have a second hearing before being discharged when disputes come up."

The paragraphs above have been devoted merely to reporting, almost verbatim, statements typical of the types of union experiences and relationships with Negro members. These have not been evaluated, for the following Chapter VII is devoted to presenting an interpretive analysis and a summary of the information expressed in these experiences, in those given in Appendix IV and in those given by union members.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NEGRO LABOR UNIONIST

JUST how Negroes become members of the labor unions of Manhattan and just what they do as union members is illustrated by the summary of a detailed analysis of the information furnished by union officials presented in Chapter VI and Appendix IV supplemented by the analysis of further information obtained through interviews with union members. The type of information furnished by the union officials was observed; that sought from the members was very similar, centering around their background, training and experience and dealing somewhat more in detail with their actual activity as union members—attendance at meetings, holding of offices, their participation in strikes, meeting obligations and sharing in the benefits of union membership. Added to these was a brief and concise statement by each member interviewed of what union membership means to him. An attempt will be made in this chapter to summarize and to generalize briefly regarding this information as well as to present excerpts from some of the statements made by members.

**BECOMING UNION MEMBERS:** There are six ways, four of which are used by all workers, in which Negroes become members of labor unions in New York. They are: (1) being charter members, (2) making direct application to the local union, (3) transferring membership from locals outside of New York, (4) being employed in a shop when it is organized by a local, (5) forming auxiliary bodies to white unions and (6) being made members through special

organizational programs for Negro workers sponsored by some of the locals. Through the use of all of these methods during and prior to the post-N.R.A. period various problems and difficulties were met and dealt with.

Until recently the first method, with a few notable exceptions, was almost unheard-of among the unions. Of course, it is needless to remark that Negroes are charter members of all Negro unions—whether or not they are independent unions or federal locals of the American Federation of Labor. In the mixed locals of the transportation and communication group there are a few other exceptions. Many old locals of the International Longshoremen's Association and of the Brotherhood of Teamsters and Chauffeurs reported Negroes as charter members, but few other old locals reported Negro charter members. On the whole, many of the older locals, organizing first as fraternal organizations, did not include Negro members. Later, sometimes very shortly after their organization, they began accepting them. On the other hand, however, the younger unions, those organized within the last five years and during the NRA period particularly, almost invariably had Negro members from their very inception. These unions, apparently profiting by the futile efforts of their predecessors to build up a strong organized labor movement with the exclusion or limitation of membership of an exploited minority of the working classes, realized the wisdom of joining the forces of all workers in one solid organization. From their origin, therefore, they have made all workers members regardless of racial characteristics.

The second method involves more difficult problems. When a worker makes application for membership, he has to satisfy at the outset certain definite requirements—citizenship, apprenticeship, efficiency test, initiation fee, etc. All of the unions studied require either that an applicant must be a

citizen of the United States or that he must have taken out his first papers at the time of application. This requirement is usually rigidly enforced in regard to all applicants. So that men of good character as well as of good training can be "assured" some unions require that a candidate be endorsed by at least two old members who know him well. On that score, many workers, being unknown to any of the union members, fail to gain admission. There are in addition the apprenticeship and efficiency test requirements. Many unions require that an applicant must have served a number of years as an apprentice either in an apprentice's union or through some other means approved by the union. These apprenticeship terms are sometimes many years; for example, the average term in the unions of the building trades—bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters and other—is four years and in the printing and publishing unions from three to six years. When one cannot show evidence of having served such terms, he usually has the alternative of taking an efficiency test. These tests are given by selected members of the union—usually men of long experience who are really competent to judge the efficiency of the worker. But the fact that the decision is left to the discretion of this examining committee allows for the interplay of personal feelings toward the applicant and sometimes his consequent elimination on that score. Added to these, or perhaps apart from them, is the initiation fee. Very often these fees are put at prohibitive amounts—\$200, \$500 and even \$1000 in some cases—for various reasons as was illustrated by the remarks of union officials, "to protect our membership", "to keep out undesirables", "to get just the best", etc. For similar reasons, high monthly or yearly dues are set up at times. In many cases payment of these fees is arranged in installments, determined at the discretion of the Committee on Admissions and based on the ability of the applicant to pay,



while in others full payment of the fee is required before membership is granted. Illustrative of the type of unions having these high fees are many of those of the highly skilled workers; for example, the elevator constructors, operative plasterers, electrical workers, heat and frost insulators, bricklayers, motion picture operators, studio mechanics, motion picture photographers and carpet and linoleum layers. It is by no means the contention here that these requirements for membership are set up specifically as bars against Negroes; however, the absence of Negro membership in practically all of these unions leaves no doubt that although the requirements theoretically apply to all applicants alike, regardless of race, they impose special hardship on Negro aspirants for membership. It is difficult or well nigh impossible for them to meet the apprenticeship requirement because opportunity in the past to serve as apprentices has been denied and Negro youth of today are by no means encouraged—but sometimes definitely excluded as in the case of the apprentices' local of the Masters, Mates and Pilots of America—to become apprentices. It goes without saying, in the case of the exorbitant initiation fee, that few workers of any group, but especially the Negro group, can pay it.

By the third method, transferring of membership from outside locals, some Negroes have entered New York locals. As a matter of fact, that is how many first entered. A number of the highly organized national or international unions have separate locals for Negroes in the South. Among these are the International Longshoremen's Association, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and Chauffeurs, practically all of the unions of the building trades—bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters, etc., the American Federation of Musicians, the National Federation of Post Office Clerks, etc. From the Negro locals of the South Negro members report that they find little difficulty, if any, in transferring

their membership to the mixed locals of New York, even in cases where such mixed locals are indifferent toward Negro membership.

From time to time locals have organized all workers in a single shop. In many of these cases there were often two or three Negroes employed. Through this method, the fourth listed above, some Negroes have gained admission to labor unions. Usually no restrictions are placed on their activity, but at times when some of them find it unpleasant to be among the white members, they drop out—the officials report—"for no good reason," or "I don't see why" or "just dropped out." On the whole, though, they remain in and become "the best members" or "the most loyal members". This has occurred most frequently in the unions of the clothing industry, of the food industry, of the printing and publishing industry and in miscellaneous unions like the Retail Clerks' and the Upholsterers.

The fifth method by which Negroes become members of New York unions is through the auxiliary body to white locals. This was attempted, unsuccessfully however, by the Motion Picture Operators back in 1925, as related in Chapter III. Almost before an auxiliary was created, it was disbanded and its Negro members made full members of the white local. Several years later the Harlem Council of Local 32B of the Building Service Employees' International Union was created to organize the building service employees in the Harlem area. At first this was just an auxiliary body responsible to the white local, but its members are now members of local 32B, at present a mixed local. It is merely a branch office similar to those maintained by the local in other sections of the city like the Lower East Side. Though not officially an auxiliary body, the West Side Branch of the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union is one in practice, for it is composed of and run by Negro union members who are

responsible directly to the parent union. Bearing a like relationship is the Domestic Workers' Union auxiliary of Local 149 of the Building Service Employees International Union. This, too, is composed of and run by Negro members. Interesting is the tendency of the auxiliary body to disband after a time. Its members usually then go into the parent local. That is the present status of the Domestic Workers' Union as well as of the others listed above.

Action of unions toward the admission and encouragement of Negro membership varies between two extremes—a complete exclusion of Negroes on the one hand and an effort to seek them out and organize them on the other. The latter, of course, is the sixth method referred to above. But even though Negro workers become union members through this method, the motives of the unions organizing them are not always sincere. Very often this is merely an effort to control the competition of Negro workers in some type of work. Then, too, in some cases the motive is neither sincere nor selfish. Circumstances cause changes. Behind the sincere motive is the desire to eliminate within the ranks of workers weaknesses and division resulting mainly from a race or color prejudice and ultimately to create greater trade union solidarity, strength and goodwill. Apparently, that was the position taken by the unions of the garment industry, particularly by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. On the other hand, behind the selfish motive is the desire to bring the Negro workers into the trade union as a means of cutting out the effects of their competition by obligating them not to compete against union labor. The terrific pressure on workers exerted by the depression which began in 1929 caused white workers to consider employment that they previously shunned. Taking advantage of this situation, the employers began to exploit and oppress further all of the workers and to continue using Negro workers, as long

as they could get them cheaper. Cognizant of this situation, some of the unions set out to recruit Negro members. This was particularly so in the case of locals of the Building Service Employees' International Union which had jurisdiction over the Manhattan downtown business section as well as over many other sections. Locals of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance which had jurisdiction over the same areas also joined in this recruiting. As a consequence of this deceptive "good will" on the part of the unions toward these Negro workers, it is now a rare thing to see Negro workers employed in those jobs that they once monopolized. They were gradually pushed out by their white fellow union members. Bound by union loyalty, they could not undercut their fellow unionists who had seized these jobs after they had been made more secure and desirable by union protection. The net result for the Negro workers was their becoming unemployed union men.

Some other unions made special efforts, sincere or otherwise, to organize Negro workers through various means which may be classified in two groups, Negro organizers and mixed organization committees. Several unions use Negro organizers. Among these are three local unions of the clothing workers, four of the transportation and communication group—Garage Washers' & Polishers', Marine Cooks & Stewards, Shipping Clerks, and Transport Workers' unions, two of the Building Service Employees, one union of the building trades, four of the food industry, one of the printing industry, one of the amusements' unions, three among the public service workers' unions, one laundry workers' union and several others. In every case Negro organizers are used only where great numbers of Negro workers are employed and usually their activity is limited to Negro workers. The use of mixed organization committees is more widespread where the workers to be organized are

both Negro and white. It is used particularly by unions of the garment industry and by unions of the retail clerks. Mainly because of the objections to joining raised by the Negro workers the unions deem it necessary to use Negro agents to establish contact with Negro workers. These objections are based on a fear of losing their jobs because of union activity and on an even greater fear of the insincerity of the unions in their efforts to organize Negro workers. One union official clearly pointed out that the Negro workers have been exploited so long by employers and ignored so long by labor unions that when these unions did develop a more favorable attitude toward Negro membership, the Negro workers remained skeptical. Once that skepticism can be overcome, progress in organizing Negro workers can be made; consequently, an attempt has been made to overcome this skepticism by the use of Negro organizers and mixed committees to deal with Negro workers. According to the reports of many union officials, a large number of Negro workers have become members of the local unions of New York City through this method as well as through the other five methods discussed above.

**ACTIVITY OF NEGRO MEMBERS:** An indication of a workers activity in any organization is his attendance at meetings and participation in the various programs of that organization. Except for many of the unions of the garment industry union officials almost invariably reported that "Negro members are inactive and never attend meeting." Interviews with these members verified, on the whole, this statement made by the officials. Why is it that this condition prevails? To what extent is it due to the attitudes of Negro and white workers toward each other or to what extent is it due to outside factors? Is the thought summed up in the remark made by a longshoremen's local official who said that the Negro worker must be accepted as "our industrial equal"

but not as "our social equal" a fair explanation of the situation? These and many other interesting questions arise when one considers this problem. While it is extremely difficult to determine the underlying causes of this action, a consideration of comments made by both officers and members of these unions does show in a general way several possible explanations. Labor union meetings have come to be more than mere business gatherings where workers come together to discuss problems of working conditions, wages, hours of work, agreements with employers; they have developed into social affairs as well—a time for fraternizing, exchanging thoughts and ideas other than those related to work, planning classes, singing, dancing, planning outings for the extra leisure time created by their success in cutting the hours of the work week, etc. This is particularly true in unions where there are many women—young women such as those employed in the garment industry. These types of union meetings and programs bring workers into close association with each other, into physical proximity. New to such a situation and handicapped by a feeling of inferiority, which has been developed by previous discrimination against them by employers and white workers, the Negro members are very timid and skeptical about freely attending the meetings or entering into the discussion of the plans of the union. Added to his handicap is the none too cordial welcome accorded these newcomers by some of the whites who have not yet been able to divorce themselves from their race or color prejudice. They are the ones who regard Negro workers as their "industrial equals" but not as "their social equals." Quite different from this general tendency is the policy of most locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union. Realizing the shyness and skepticism of the new Negro members, these locals often go out of their way to make their Negro members feel that they are "just like any

other member" by insisting that they take part in the social as well as the business activities of the locals.

Failure of Negro members to attend meetings regularly is not due solely to the unwillingness of some of the white members to associate with them or vice versa. Having become members, many feel, because of a lack of understanding on the one hand and a lack of interest on the other, that it is not necessary for them to attend meetings so long as their dues are paid; therefore, they pay their dues so that they can keep union cards, and, in turn, retain their jobs. But, they never attend meetings. Still another group, mainly women, do not attend meetings because they cannot sacrifice the time to do so. Many of these, chiefly bread winners and family heads, have to rush from the job to their homes where they have to care for their children and perform the usual chores of housekeeping. Both officials and members offered several other reasons, all centering around these four types—shyness and timidity which some never overcome, the expression of an antagonistic feeling of race or color prejudice by some white members, the lack of interest of some Negro members and the outside demands of home duty. Although it cannot be indisputably stated, the first two are probably the principal reasons for Negroes' failure to attend meetings regularly.

Holding of offices is another indication of the activity of members in a union. Do Negro members hold offices? What offices do they hold and how do they function as officers? To what extent do they actually participate in the process of collective bargaining? These questions were answered by union officials interviewed, white and Negro. Before noting just what offices Negroes hold, let us consider the ways by which members become officers. There are three methods used: (1) election, (2) appointment and (3)

selection because of seniority. By the first, election, a member becomes an officer as a result of his influence over his fellow workers, through an exhibition of his interest in the union through participation in its activities, by the sheer force of his personality as a leader, etc. Of course, politics and cliques play their part, too. Most executive officers—presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, business agents, treasurers, Executive Board members—are chosen in this manner. By the second method, appointment, there is greater opportunity for a personal element to enter into the choice. An officer or committee empowered to appoint other minor officers or committeemen may allow personal dislikes and prejudices to prevent the appointment of deserving members to office. On the other hand, the third, selection according to seniority, allows for no interplay of personal issues or prejudices. Few unions use the latter two methods except for the selection of minor officers, trustees, chairmen of committees and, executive board members in some cases. With these points in mind let us consider what the Negro union officer is.

Except in Negro unions or those dominated by a majority of Negro members, Negroes as a rule do not hold executive positions. The one big exception to this is offered by the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union which has a Negro president although its Negro membership is less than one-third of the total. His position was earned through seniority right. There is a Negro president of the Ladies Apparel Shipping Clerks, whose membership is about one half Negro. All other Negro presidents are at the head of Negro locals. However, the rule is a bit more flexible when it comes to the office of vice-president. A number of unions other than Negro unions have Negro vice-presidents. Outstanding among these are Local 119—Hotel and Restaurant Workers, the membership of which is but one twelfth Negro and Local 32B of the Building Service Employees' International



Union, whose membership is a little less than one third Negro. In one or two locals there are Negro secretaries—usually recording secretaries. Also, in many unions there are one, two, three or even more Negro members on Executive Boards of from fourteen to forty members. The Executive Board is really the governing body and the policy forming agency of the union; membership on it is therefore quite important. Sadly missing are Negro business agents. Usually, the business agent is sent out as the union's representative to make arrangements, among other things, for big jobs to be handled by the local. In the building trades, transportation and communication and the garment industries, especially, is this a strategic position—important because he usually tips off his men about jobs and “looks out for his own”, as one official described his action. It is not necessary to list again at this point all of the offices, executive and minor, held by Negroes: they are given for each local union in the preceding chapter, and in Appendix IV, but it is interesting to note the reasons given for these conditions.

Many officials declared that Negroes do not hold offices “because they don't take active part in the meetings” or because “they don't show up” or because “they will not fight for their place.” If these statements are wholly true, and in a large measure they are, then Negro members themselves are to be blamed for their poor representation on the official staffs of the locals. On the other hand, if the situation is like some other officials described it in a few unwitting remarks, all to the effect that there are no Negro officers “because there are too few of them [Negro members] in this local to elect one,” then it is readily observed that factors other than their inactivity—cliques and other groups set up on a racial basis—are responsible for their not holding office. The fact that in unions dominated by a majority of Negro members Negroes hold executive offices

shows that this maneuvering works both ways. Thus, there is little doubt that both of these factors, inactivity and racial sentiment, operate strongly in the election or appointment of Negro officers. Be that as it may, some Negroes do get to be officers.

This fact brings up the other question of how they function as officers. Do they actually go to the front and fight in the negotiation of agreements, and do they, on the whole, perform the duties incumbent on them as officers? The available information obviously indicates again that, except in unions dominated by Negroes, Negro officers are not allowed full opportunity to exercise the power of their office and to function as they should. Usually, some other officer, backed by a majority of the members, takes charge without regard to the duly elected Negro officer. Here, too, there are two exceptions. The Negro president of the Marine Cooks' and Stewards' Union and the Negro vice-president of Local 32B of the Building Service Employees' International Union are extraordinarily active in all the affairs of their unions. That Negro officers are capable and are willing to go to the front and actually participate in the collective bargaining process is well illustrated by the action of these officers and by A. Phillip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a Negro union. Through Randolph's tireless efforts and tactful leadership this union has partially conquered one of the most powerful employers in the United States, the Pullman Company. However, the position of the Negro officer in mixed unions not dominated by Negro members is more accurately described by other officers and members, who stated that they "are put there" for psychological effect—"put there to keep them [Negroes] from feeling that they are discriminated against." But one should not despair completely because of this condition for, as a matter of fact, even that represents

quite an achievement for Negro members. Only a few years ago, Negro officers of mixed locals were unheard of.

On the question of meeting the obligations and sharing benefits of membership a great deal can be said; however, at this time only a few aspects of these two questions will be considered. The main obligations of union membership are the regular payment of dues and assessments and loyalty to the union by way of upholding its constitution and by-laws through varied means such as refusal to work on non-union jobs or to work under conditions other than the union standards or to work with non-union men and a host of other things. Practically all officials reported that although Negro members do not always attend meetings, they are good dues paying members. That is what they usually meant when they remarked that when Negroes find out what it's all about they become "the best members" or the "most loyal members." Of course, there is another factor that automatically causes a member to pay dues regularly. To work one must have his union card; to get the card he must pay his dues; therefore, desiring to work, he pays his dues so that he will be allowed to work should he get it. This is the case with Negro members as with others. As to their bearing the other obligations they are just like the average member except when they are forced to be otherwise. Some such cases will be discussed below.

Willing and prompt meeting of obligations does not always guarantee an equal sharing of the benefits of union membership. The greatest of these benefits are security of employment under union conditions, security through protection against arbitrary discharge by employers, and equal opportunity in sharing new employment under the union's jurisdiction. How do the Negro members who have met the obligations figure in the sharing of the benefits? When

Negroes are employed in more or less permanent jobs at the time they become unions members, they usually remain in such jobs under whatever security and improved working conditions the union can maintain for them. Although at the time of organization they may have been working for wages less than those of white workers doing the same work and although they have been working longer hours, one uniform scale of wages and hours for all workers alike is set up and enforced by union-employer agreements. Many union officials and members reported that in some cases employers would threaten to fire Negro workers when union agreements compelled them to pay Negro workers wages equal to those of white workers and to require the same number of working hours of all workers alike. In response to these threats a few locals called shop strikes, insisting—and usually successfully—that the Negro members involved be retained by the employers. This has occurred in the garment industry more than in any other industry, particularly with the local unions of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. On the other hand, some of the other unions, locals of the Building Service Employees' union, for example, allowed employers to carry out such threats and then filled the vacancies with white fellow unionists of the Negro workers. Through such moves some jobs previously occupied or monopolized by Negroes were closed to them when the union gained prominence. As pointed out above, among these jobs are hotel and restaurant jobs and elevators operators' jobs in downtown Manhattan.

In contrast to the procedure in the case of the permanent jobs is the entirely different movement with the short-time and seasonal jobs like factory work, longshore, trucking and marine work, building work, carpentry, brick and stone laying, plastering, and amusement work. In these types of work the union usually negotiates an agreement with em-

ployers to hire union labor only; specifically, union labor of given unions. In such cases members of these unions have preference and are all supposed to have equal chances in getting work. It is not a matter of competing by offering services for smaller wages or longer hours, for the union sets up a fixed scale. It is supposed to be a matter of "the early bird getting the worm". But what does happen in the case of Negro workers? Whether or not they get an equal chance as union men in good standing to get this work depends mainly on two factors, (1) the policy of the employers in regard to the employment of Negroes and (2) the attitude of the factory department head or the stevedore or the foreman or, in general, the one who actually selects or hires the workers who are members of the union. In reference to the first, the issue is clear. An employer either wants or does not want Negro workers. In like manner, he may want all Negroes, or all Italians or Chinamen as the case may be. This may depend on his purpose. This situation is illustrated by a kosher meat dealer who requested a Jewish butcher from the Amalgamated Meat Cutters' Union or a French restaurant which called for a French caterer or a German steamship which asked for German stewards. These choices are rational. Very often, however, irrational choices are made as in the case when an employer requests white bricklayers, white marine firemen, white motion picture machine operators, etc. In these cases the union should insist on the employment of any competent member, regardless of race, since no special racial characteristic of the worker in addition to his skill is necessary for the satisfactory performance of the job. Unfortunately for Negro workers, unions have not yet reached this idealistic point of view and attitude. As a result, then, Negro workers are sometimes denied an opportunity to share the benefits of union membership

merely because of an arbitrary attitude on the part of employers.

In the second case, the problem is different. Here, there enters into the whole situation an element of personal feeling. Although the foreman or factory department head is a union man himself, therefore duty bound to his union and his fellow members, he is usually influenced by a number of outside conditions. He may be an ambitious fellow and, as such, may use this extraordinary power to further his own ends. Instances like this are expressed in his showing favoritism to his friends, to friends of his friends, to those who supported him when he ran for office in the union or in some outside organization. Then, too, it must be remembered that the foreman is a man of some nationality or race. If he is in any way race-conscious, this fact is very often displayed by his giving the advantage to members of his race. For that reason it often occurs that a job is dominated by Italians when there is an Italian foreman, by Jews if there is a Jewish foreman, by Irishmen if there is an Irish foreman, and so on down the line. But finding a job dominated by Negroes because there is a Negro foreman is about as rare as finding a four-leafed clover, for just about that often does a Negro member become a foreman. Not always, however, is the course of action taken by a foreman the result of his own personal desires. Sometimes, groups within the union itself bring great pressure to bear on him. For example, if there is an anti-Negro feeling among the members, those having such a feeling force the foreman, through varied and subtle means, to hire no Negroes. Similarly, if there is an anti-Jewish or anti-Irish feeling, the results are similar for those groups. More often, though, there is not a complete exclusion of Negroes from the work. Some foremen shrewdly give them the run around. They hire a few Negro union members to make the choices seem fair; but in a few

days they will knock off these men giving as excuses reasons like "come back in a few days," "this section of the work is finished," etc. Thus, in the building trades, for example, on jobs requiring four months, six months or a much longer time for completion Negroes often get work, off and on, for just a few weeks or a month at most. As a result there is a much greater turnover of work and much smaller gross earnings among Negro union workers than among others, particularly in the building trades, longshore and marine work. The general condition regarding the sharing of benefits of union membership by Negro members has been summed up in a remark of a union bricklayer who said:

If you ask me, I'll say, "*emphatically no*"; we do not get the same opportunities and advantages as the white members. We pay the same fees and dues, work the same number of hours when we work and get the same sick benefits, but, let me tell you, we surely don't get the same opportunity for work. When it comes time to knock off, we all stop together; we don't have to work any longer than the others; there's no difference in the working conditions—but we can't *get the work!* And if we are lucky enough to get a little, really we are the "last hired and the first fired".

Growing out of the economic pressure upon Negro members through a lack of equal opportunity for employment, because of these discriminatory practices discussed above, are several serious problems that are a handicap to the success of any organized labor movement. Among these are the difficulties involved in the "kick-back racket", in the undercutting and underbidding of union standards of wages and hours and in working on non-union jobs. To determine the extent of the prevalence of these problems is most difficult because, out of fear of losing their union cards and jobs, the workmen involved are very cautious, saying

nothing about these practices except accidentally. However, in speaking to union officials and members and in making general observations the writer gathered a little information which will be mentioned here before passing to the next broad indication of the activity of Negro members in unions—their strike experiences. In the “kickback racket” the foremen make secret agreements with some workers to choose them if they promise to pay to them certain sums of money for so doing. When pay day comes around the foremen meet these workers at appointed places and get from them this cut on their wage. If the men willingly and quietly “come across”, they are kept on the job by the foremen. This is by no means limited to Negro workers, but they, being denied employment through legitimate channels, are among the hard hit victims who do not dare breathe a word of complaint to any one. The undercutting and underbidding of union standards operate in a very similar manner. The secret agreement in this case is directly between the employer, who is compelled to employ union labor, and the employees, the union members. Taking advantage of the union members’ need of work, the employer hires them at wages and hours below the union standard with the understanding that they are to deceive union officials by telling them that they are working under union conditions. This, too, is not limited to Negro union members. The New York Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians is at present attempting to do away with this practice which is said to be growing rapidly among its members. In the third situation, working on non-union jobs, the union men, failing to get work on union jobs, turn to taking what they can get; often therefore, they work on non-union jobs. They are forced to do these things; they take the chance. If caught, they merely pay the fine or accept any other penalty placed on them by the union and, in some cases, they just discon-



tinue union membership. As pointed out at the outset of this paragraph much information on these conditions is not available; nevertheless, that which is available does indicate that the failure of some members of unions to enjoy an equal opportunity in the sharing of union benefits, employment in this case, is really defeating the purpose of the unions by dividing their strength and power and weakening the morale of their members.

The strike experience of Negro union members and non-members, too, has always been a paramount issue in the determination of their membership in some unions and in their relationship to their fellow members in others. Various references throughout the first four chapters of this treatise have shown the early activity of Negroes in strikes to have been in the role of strike-breakers. The fundamental underlying cause of this is easy to understand. In nearly every case mentioned strike breaking by Negro workers was against unionists who excluded them from their unions and thereby excluded them from opportunity to work. Almost invariably, these exclusions were based on race or color prejudice. In such cases the most effective weapon available for the Negro to fight this barrier to his means of a livelihood was strike breaking; consequently, when labor disputes arose between employers and white union men, Negro workers utterly disregarded, and justifiably so, the efforts of these white workers to improve their own working conditions. Eagerly they seized these opportunities not only to earn wages for a short time, but also to force their membership in the organizations representative of the workers—the unions. Although in a great many cases Negro workers were discharged immediately at the close of these disputes, in many others they were retained and even made members of some of those unions against which they had worked as strike breakers. These references show also that in many

cases racial antipathy and antagonism were abated while in others they were intensified. Over a period of years, however, the whole situation has somewhat changed, as is shown by the more recent strike experiences of unions with Negro workers. Of course, during and just after the NRA period Negroes had become members of many unions. A summary of conditions at that time is given in the following paragraph.

Of the 143 local unions that have Negro members, 117 reported recent strikes in which Negro members participated. These strikes were called for two main purposes, (1) to readjust some condition of work—hours, wages, vacations, physical surroundings and (2) to protest against some unfair treatment to union members by employers—arbitrary dismissal, discrimination against union members, etc. The great majority had to do with working conditions while a few involved individual members. In some of the latter cases protest was registered against dismissals of Negro union members. In all of the 117 strikes Negro union members participated as fellow unionists; that is, they walked off the job with the other workers. This is indeed significant and unquestionably substantiates the remark of the officers who said that in times of strikes Negro members are "most loyal" and "stick out when all others are gone back". In a very few of these cases, about five, some of the union members of locals having large numbers remained on the job as scabs. Perhaps this was an expression of resentment of the "run around" some of these men had received at the hands of union foremen in giving out union work. After a short while, however, they were usually persuaded to join the others. Practically all of these locals reported that action like this—striking together—helps the workers "to understand each other better" and "brings them closer together". In approximately 30 of these strikes unorganized Negroes worked as strike breakers. Notable

among these were the Coastwise Longshoremen's strikes in which Negroes from Harlem were brought to the piers "in moving vans under police protection" and the Metal Bed and Spring Workers' strike when Negroes were brought to the factories in "curtained trucks." In these and other instances little race friction was created as there was usually a large proportion of white strike breakers. Then, too, the union men realized that most of these workers, Negro and white, were unorganizable; they were professional strike breakers who were not interested in unionism. On only two occasions did Negro non-union workers work as strike breakers against unions that had no Negro members. In the case of the Waiters' local although the strike was broken still no Negroes were accepted as members when they applied. Despite these few isolated, unfavorable cases, it may be reasonably concluded that, on the whole, the role of the Negro worker as a strike breaker is fast coming to an end because the major clause of that activity, exclusion from membership in unions, has been almost completely removed. The Negro worker is, in reality, becoming the loyal union member.

**EXPERIENCES OF NEGRO UNION MEMBERS:** The paragraphs above have been devoted to an analysis and summary of the activities of local unions with Negro members as given in remarks of both union officials and members. In the interviews with Negro union members efforts were made to bring out their background and experience through noting the state or section of the country from which they came, the number of years they had worked at their occupations and the number of years they had been union men. Usually, the interview was closed with a final, brief statement made by the members in answer to a direct question, "What does union membership mean to you?" That the reader may get a further and more complete idea of their actual attitude

toward union membership a few of these brief statements, along with the notes on background and experience, are listed below.

1.—A woman garment presser for 5 years—native New Yorker—union member for 2 years—joined union when shop in which she worked was organized—union membership “means—improvement of conditions, better pay, shorter hours, sanitary working conditions, social activity, educational classes—teaches strength, unity and self respect—demands respect and gets it from the boss”.

2.—A truckman and chauffeur for 25 years—native New Yorker—union member for 10 years—joined union of own accord—stated, “The main thing that the union means to me is good pay. Why, we used to draw down from \$45 to \$60 most every week. Those times are gone now, but I’m still going to stick.”

3.—A longshoreman for 9 years—from South Carolina—in New York 20 years—union member 1 year—joined union after a 1934 strike “because we had to have the union button to get work”—stated that union membership “don’t mean no good to me—not a thing—it means a hell of a lot to the white men because they get all the work with good pay, but the colored workers don’t get a thing from the union.”

4.—A barber for 18 years—from Philadelphia—in New York 10 years—ex-union member—joined the union “because everybody else was joining” and discontinued membership when union disbanded—stated that “there’s no profit from being a union member—Negro members are not sent to jobs in white shops—barbers’ unions may be good in some places [for white shops] but not for Harlem.”

5.—An elevator Operator for 7 years—from Jacksonville, Florida—in New York 7 years—union member 1 year—joined to get work—stated, “The big benefit I get from the

union is better pay. Before I joined I used to get \$35 a month; on the union job I got \$50. I think the union ought to continue and that there should be more of them."

6.—A bricklayer for 35 years—from Marion, Indiana—in New York 9 years—union member for 31 years but member of New York union for 9 years, having come in by transfer—stated what union membership meant as "—I would say this, and make it short and terse—nothing now! It's taking from me more than its giving. It made conditions, wages, hours, etc., better for all—no doubt about that—but the whites are employed steadily and the Negroes just now and then—really, we are the last hired and first fired."

7.—A plasterer for 32 years—from South Carolina—in New York 13 years—union member of New York local for 13 years, having joined by a transfer from a South Carolina Negro local—had to be union men to get work in New York—stated of union membership,—“it doesn't do much for me, although it does get better working hours and better pay—it's not such a big help to me because I don't get a fair chance to work on these good jobs."

8.—A bricklayer for 19 years—from Georgia—in New York 21 years—union member for 21 years—realizes the necessity of possession of a union card as a requisite to employment and feels—"Aw, what's the use—we just want to get our cards in shape for a job."

9.—A compressed air worker for 11 years—native New Yorker—union member for 7 months but "never finished paying the damned fee (initiation fee of \$50)"—dropped out of union and later tried to join, but initiation fee was then \$200—stated of the union—"say, listen, they don't give a damn who joins the union—as long as you can come across with that fee, they'll take you in—I got a bunch of colored friends in the union, but I can't get back in because I can't foot the two hundred bucks."

10.—A painter for many years—from the West Coast—in New York 4 years—union member of New York local through transfer from West Coast local—stated of union membership,—“to me the union means a place of fellowship for workers having the same problems as I have—security on the job and protection against bad working conditions and unscrupulous employers.”

11.—A common laborer in building trades for 17 years—from North Carolina—in New York 3 years—union member for 3 years—said of union membership—“it means pretty much—kept me in regular work since I have been a member—I make as much in 30 hours as I made in 7 days on non-union jobs.”

12.—A headwaiter for 27 years—from Pennsylvania—in New York 20 years—tried to join a New York waiters' union which refused him membership—then joined a Negro headwaiters' union—states—“Well, in New York the waiters' union don't mean a thing for the colored waiter—instead of helping them it keeps them off the job by not letting them become members.”

13.—A cook and waiter for 30 years—from Florida—in New York 22 years—ex-union member of a Negro waiters' union which was a local of a white union—stated—“When it closed out, we didn't have any place else to go—white waiters' union refused us membership—but the colored union did keep us on the job with union pay and union hours.”

14.—A compositor for 16 years—from Trinidad, British West Indies—in New York 11 years—a union member 6 months—stated—“I think there should be a greater drive in all other industries—not printing alone—to make the workers (Negro) more union conscious and to help force them into the unions—I say this because I do feel that the union has something to offer us in the way of better wages—even if we do have to work in Negro shops only.”

15.—A printing pressman for 11 years—from St. Lucia, B. W. I.—in New York 11 years—union member 6 months—stated—“The union should compel white bosses to hire colored members sent to them—as long as they’re competent—and you bet your life they’re competent or else they wouldn’t be members—while fighting the union to stand behind us as members we also got to fight for ourselves.”

16.—A musician for 16 years—from Kentucky—in New York 12 years—member of New York local 12 years—through transfer from Negro local—stated about union membership—“I can only say that you can’t do anything with it and you can’t do anything without it—since I got to choose, I’ll keep a membership card.”

17.—A musician for 15 years—from North Carolina—in New York 10 years—member of New York union for 9 years through transfer from Negro local—stated about union membership—“Means only a life insurance benefit to me—the morale of the members has been so broken down by chiseling in and underbidding union wages by both Negro and white members that to be a union man means about nothing to me now.”

18.—A musician for 5 years—from North Carolina—in New York 16 years—member of union 5 years—stated—“Did just as good as a non-union man—apart from the insurance the union is no good to me—it hasn’t helped me one bit.”

19.—A motion picture machine operator for 9 years—from South Carolina—in New York 34 years—union member 9 years—stated—“I believe it far better to be a union man than a non-union man. I believe that if I am given the conditions described for members of the union, I would be better off. My only complaint is that I have been stuck in one little theatre (in Harlem) and remained there for

eight years—while there have been better positions to place me in, I have been denied that.”

20.—A school teacher for 26 years—native New Yorker—ex-member of teachers’ union—was member for 12 years but left because the union was “never willing to make the cause of the Negro a major concern.”

21.—A school teacher for 2 years—native New Yorker—stated—“Oh, I knew that the union is supposed to improve the working conditions of the teachers and get them higher salaries—so I joined in 1935—but I haven’t done much as a member yet.”

22.—An engineer for “many years”—from Kentucky—in New York 2 years—union member one year—joined “to keep the white workers, union members, from beating me out of work”—stated about union membership,—“I like the union and I like it fine—but they don’t cooperate in New York as in Kentucky—by being a union man you can go to work and keep on the job—when you’re out of work the union will put you right back on.”

23.—A window cleaner for 4 years—from South Carolina—in New York 7 years—an ex-union member who—“wouldn’t join the union again because it don’t mean any good to you—all I did was pay dues—the union never got me work—the union was really for the white fellows—it don’t get work for the colored members, and we can all do better out of it because we can get more work—although we don’t get as much for it.”

24.—An artist photographer for 7 years—resident of New York for 13 years—union member for 18 months—“joined because I realized that it was the first and only opportunity for Negroes to join a newspaper union—felt it an honor to join and saw an opportunity for paving the way for the Negroes in the future—union membership means security on the job and protection against bad working conditions.”



25.—A journalist for 12 years—resident in New York for 15 years—union member for 18 months—joined union because she—“realized the great need for Negroes to organize for security in employment”—said of union membership—“Added to security of employment—I get the greatest pleasure from attendance at meetings where I get a chance to sit next to and discuss with the great journalists—knowing that they face the same problems we face is quite gratifying—this union means a great deal to all of us.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

THE brief digests and occasional generalizations in the closing paragraphs of each chapter have obviated the necessity of making an elaborate summary at this point. However, in order that the full significance of the conclusions on the relationship of Negroes to the labor unions of Manhattan may be clearly defined, it is pertinent here to reiterate at least the outstanding points of the foregoing chapter compendia.

In Chapter I there is a discussion of the industrial and occupational trends among Negroes of New York City—and of Manhattan particularly—for the purpose of determining to what extent Negroes are engaged in occupations that labor unions have brought under their control. The analysis of census occupational figures and other available material disclosed that from the time Negro workers became “free men” in New York in 1827 they have carried on a tense and ceaseless—and not altogether fruitless—struggle for another freedom, one through which they might remove themselves at will from the undesirable occupations—mainly domestic and personal service—to which they had been traditionally “lashed” because of their previous condition of servitude; a freedom by virtue of which they could enter other occupations offering greater economic returns—in the shape of higher wages, shorter working hours, better working conditions—and the benefits of trade unionism. Among these more desirable occupations are those of the manufacturing and mechanical industries, trade and transportation

industries, and other skilled and semi-skilled industries. Although by the beginning of the twentieth century only a little progress had been made, by the end of the World War great strides had been taken. It is true that the labor shortage caused by increased manufacturing during the World War, rather than a better understanding between white and black workers, furnished an opportunity for this step forward; nevertheless, this condition resulted in the establishment for the Negro workers of a greater equilibrium in their employment, demonstrated beyond all doubt that they can be efficient workers in industrial pursuits and, on the whole, changed their entire economic status. In contrast to the 70.1 percent of all gainfully occupied Negroes concentrated in domestic and personal service in the pre-war days, about 1910, was the relatively lower percent, 54.9, in the same type of work in 1930. At that time as many as 20.1 percent of all gainfully occupied Negroes had entered manufacturing and mechanical pursuits.

Extremely important, however, was the very noticeable absence of any appreciable increase in the number of Negro workers in occupations requiring apprenticeships and in the highly organized trades and industries—painting, bricklaying, plumbing, plastering, printing, the machinery industry, the electrical industry, the upholstering industry, etc. The majority of the workers released from domestic and personal service pursuits became semi-skilled factory operatives. Since 1930 many unions—with the early aid of N.R.A.—have extended their control over most factory workers, thereby bringing many Negro workers within the sphere of their membership recruiting. On the other hand, this continued absence of Negroes actually engaged in those highly organized skilled trades, that were not affected by the abnormal conditions of war-time industrial activity, together with definite knowledge that many of the unions whose

members monopolized these trades were indifferent and even hostile toward Negro members and Negro apprentices, leads clearly to the conclusion that the trade unions themselves have been a major factor in preventing some competent, skilled Negro workers from working at their trades and thereby qualifying for union membership.

This consideration of the occupational distribution of Negro workers, which showed the extent to which they met the first prerequisite of membership in unions of given crafts or industries by actually being such workers, served as a background for the analysis of their actual relations with the unions. Because the World War and the N.R.A. caused radical changes in the relationship of Negroes to industry and to labor unions in Manhattan, this analysis was logically divided into three sections: first, labor union activity of Negroes before the World War; second, from the beginning of the World War to the N.R.A. period; and third, during the N.R.A. period. This was followed by an extensive study of conditions just after the close of the N.R.A. period.

Of conditions before the World War it was found that at an early date—as far back as 1808—Negro workers had become aware of the value of organization as one of the methods by which their economic interests could be protected and promoted. Their early organizations which were merely mutual aid and protective associations had little to do with collective bargaining. Later, however, Negro workers realized the effectiveness of the trade unions in dealing with matters related to conditions of employment. Feeling that their problems were the same of other workers and wishing to receive the benefits of this type of organization, they attempted to affiliate themselves with those unions that had been created by their fellow white workers. Invariably, they found membership in these unions closed to them because of two factors, (1) an economic factor—the desire

of white workers to hold their monopoly of employment in the skilled trades—and (2) a social factor—a denial of membership to Negro workers because of a color prejudice and a fear that association in trade unions would ultimately work for the “social equality” of Negroes and whites. Cognizant of this division in the ranks of labor, employers often used Negro workers as strike breakers in efforts to defeat the rising power of organized action by white workers. Thus, throughout the decades following the Civil War there was a wave of labor disputes between employers and white workers and between white workers and Negro workers. Practically no benefit accrued to Negro workers from their strike-breaking activities, for usually at the end of strikes they were replaced by the striking white workers. During this same period, Negro workers had been making efforts at independent Negro unionism. Mainly because of corrupt political leadership these efforts failed. The efforts of the leading national labor organizations among white workers, the National Labor Union and the Knights of Labor, failed likewise and for the same reason. Founded on the principle of local autonomy for affiliated bodies, the American Federation of Labor, which came into being in 1881, has from its inception continuously made declarations and pronouncements to the effect that there was to be no discrimination against any workers because of race, creed or color. These declarations, however, had little influence on the affiliated New York local unions and, as a consequence, the policy of these locals varied from a complete exclusion to an acceptance of Negro workers on an equal footing with white workers. In the meantime Negro workers had kept up their pounding on the closed doors of the A. F. of L. and other unions of the time for admission. Although a count in 1910 revealed that there were 1,358 Negroes, a negligible number, in the various trade unions of New York, it is

reasonable to conclude that, as late as the beginning of the World War, the majority of Negro workers were not participants in the organized labor movement in New York City.

As pointed out above, the changes in the industrial distribution of Negro workers caused by the World War had great effects on the organized labor movement in its relation to Negro workers. Increased manufacturing in the big industrial center of New York created a demand for labor far greater than the existing supply—even including the hitherto unusual skilled Negro male and female labor. The cessation of immigration and the departure of aliens for their mother countries further depleted the labor supply. As a result of this condition wages soared and workers from other sections of the country were attracted to New York. One of the chief expressions of this situation was the great influx from the south of Negro workers who eagerly seized the opportunity to engage in the skilled and semi-skilled factory work with white workers who were organized in most cases. This caused some concern on the part of labor leaders and others interested in workers as to what could be done in the way of helping these new workers to adjust and integrate themselves in the organized labor movement. The summary of these efforts in the closing paragraphs of chapter III is repeated here: (1) agitation for the acceptance of Negro workers in the organized labor movement on an equal footing with the other workers—represented by the “economic radicals” of the post-War period, (2) fact-finding efforts to get true pictures of existing conditions to serve as a basis for planned action for their improvement, (3) individual labor union action—efforts of individual unions to bring Negro workers into their unions and a few efforts at independent Negro unionism and (4) collective labor union action—creation of a central body, The Trade Union Com-

mittee for Organizing Negro Workers, composed of white and Negro trade unionists and set up for the purpose of training Negro workers for greater participation in the organized labor movement through unions of their respective trades and for the further purpose of persuading unions barring Negro membership to change their attitude. By 1928, when all of these efforts had had opportunity to function, another count of the Negroes in labor unions of New York City was made. This time there were 2,700 Negro union members—just about twice the number in 1910, but a negligible increase when the many thousands of Negro workers available for membership are considered! Although little gain in the number of Negroes admitted to union membership was actually realized as an immediate result of these four types of effort, they all helped to lay the foundation upon which was built a better understanding among some of the workers and the accompanying attainment by these workers of their place with other workers in the organized labor movement.

Chapter IV, which presented in the first place the gains of Negro industrial workers in labor unions under the N.R.A., shows that their new position was the outcome of two factors, (1) the more friendly attitude of white workers toward the acceptance of Negro workers into their unions and (2) the new attitude of Negro workers themselves toward taking the risk involved in the early stages of unionization of workers. In reference to the former, it was pointed out that late in 1933 and early in 1934 unions, realizing that the time was ripe for great organizational work because of the protection intended by Section 7A of the National Industrial Recovery Act, began organizing all workers in shops. In many cases large numbers of Negroes were employed in these shops, and for the first time they were considered by white workers as fellow workers rather than as

inferior Negro workers. It was pointed out further that there was apparently a shift in the attitude of both white and Negro workers from a race consciousness to a class consciousness. In the face of a common interest—organization for the purpose of gaining shorter hours, increased wages, etc. through collective bargaining—the cold barriers of race prejudice were forgotten. Added to this new favorable attitude of white workers was the willingness of Negro workers to fall in line. Since Section 7A was to offer protection against losing one's job because of union activity, the greatest obstacle in the way of organizing Negro workers, the fear of losing their hard-earned jobs, was partly removed; consequently, they felt the spirit of the time and fell in line with the other workers. This was particularly true of the workers in the garment industry and in a few other industries that came within the jurisdiction of the N.I.R.A. A great number of Negro workers entered labor unions through this method. On the other hand, in unions controlling work that did not come within the purview of the N.I.R.A.—unions of some of the branches of the building trades and the transportation and communication workers, for example—the same apathetic and in many cases hostile attitude of the white members toward Negro members continued to prevail; nevertheless, on the whole, the gains accruing from the N.R.A. in the organization of Negro workers outweigh by far any losses.

During the same period three other movements got under way, all partially growing out of the interest in organized labor created by Section 7A. The first two, the picket committee of The Citizens' League for Fair Play and the Negro Industrial Clerical Alliance, which sponsored the picketing movement for the employment of Negro workers in the business houses where they spent their money—both fully described in Chapter IV—were not legitimate



labor organizations. However, before their activities were stopped by injunctions against picketing for the purpose indicated above they had caused the employment of many Negroes in positions other than "porter" and cleaning work and had helped to improve the working conditions of those already employed, thereby demonstrating the possibilities of labor union activity among workers in the business section of Harlem. This was followed by application by Negro workers in these positions for membership in bona-fide unions of workers of their crafts and by the response of these unions, which sent out special committees to organize those workers. The third movement was a renewed effort at the creation of a central agency for first educating Negro workers in the principles of trade unionism and then inducting them into the unions of their trades. This movement was expressed in the First Negro Labor Conference and its successor, the Negro Labor Committee—a group of twenty-five Negro and white members of various trade unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor whose job was to set up a program in harmony with the "Trade Union Policy and Program" of the American Federation of Labor for the purpose of bringing Negro workers into the legitimate organized labor movement. The great enthusiasm and interest expressed by the organized labor movement of New York City were indicative of the realization by white workers that they cannot free themselves from industrial exploitation through organized action so long as any form of labor is left outside of such organized action. In like manner there was a greater conviction among Negro workers that collective bargaining through mixed labor unions was the most effective means of coping with their problems of employment.

The findings of the intensive post-N.R.A. study of labor union conditions among Negroes in Manhattan were pre-

sented in three sections; (1) extent of membership in local unions as given in Chapter V, (2) excerpts from experiences of these local unions with Negro members as given in Chapter VI and Appendix IV and (3) activity of Negro union members as given in Chapter VII. The first section showed that of the 424,794 members in the unions surveyed 39,574, or 9.3 percent, were Negroes. This proportion represents a substantial improvement over the last estimate made in 1928. At that time 3.8 percent of the organized workers of New York was Negro. It is safe to conclude here that during the early post-N.R.A. period the Negroes of Manhattan constituted a much greater proportion of all organized workers than ever before. Further, it is highly probable that their general activity during the N.R.A. period was responsible in great measure for this significant increase in the Negro proportion of all union members. Interesting is the further observation that Negroes form a greater proportion of the organized workers in unskilled labor such as transportation and communication work and domestic and personal service, the percentages for these being 24.8 and 22.5, respectively. On the other hand, Negro membership in unions of the highly skilled workers is negligible, being less than one half of one percent in the paper manufacturing, publishing and printing industries, 1.6 in the leather industries, 2.7 in the building trades, etc. Another conclusion is that Negroes constitute a higher proportion in the membership of independent unions than in affiliates of the American Federation of Labor. When the total membership figures are broken down for these two groups, the proportions are found to be 9 percent and 11.8 percent for A. F. of L. and independent unions, respectively. As pointed out in Chapter V, many Negro workers, finding membership hard or impossible to obtain in some A. F. of L. unions, have found recourse in the more friendly and fraternal ranks of the

independent unions. Notable exceptions to this generalization are the cases involved in the four railroad Brotherhoods which exclude Negro members by constitutional provisions.

Sections two and three mentioned above, excerpts from experiences of local unions with Negro members and activity of Negro union members, are closely related. As a matter of fact, section three is a summary of section two. Stated in the first paragraph of this section, Chapter VII, is its purpose—to “summarize” and “generalize” the scattered remarks made by union officials and members. This is done very briefly and the main conclusions arrived at in that summary are repeated here: In the first place, it was concluded that Negroes became members of Manhattan locals by the following six methods: (1) being charter members, (2) making direct application to local unions, (3) transferring membership from locals outside of New York, (4) being employed in a shop when it is organized by a local, (5) forming auxiliary units to white locals and (6) being made members through the special organizational programs for Negro workers sponsored by some locals. During the early post-N.R.A. period, the first, fourth, and sixth methods were most widely used, while in prior years the second, third and fifth were used, the second and third being early methods by which Negroes gained admittance to the unions.

In reference to the activity of Negroes after they became members of unions several interesting conclusions were reached. Four main causes were offered in explanation of the reasons why Negro members, on the whole, do not attend meetings regularly: (1) shyness and timidity because of the new situation, (2) expressions of antagonistic feelings by prejudiced white members, (3) lack of interest because of a satisfaction from the early benefits of union membership and (4) lack of time because of outside duties. The information gathered warranted the conclusion that the first two are

probably most frequently the cause of the failure of Negro members to attend meetings regularly.

A study of the Negro union officer led to the conclusion that as a rule Negro members do not hold executive offices—president, secretary, business agent, etc.—except in Negro unions or in mixed unions dominated by a majority of Negro members. All explanations center around: (1) their activity in meetings—failure to attend regularly—and (2) the existence of color prejudice in some mixed locals. The latter undoubtedly is the greater influence, for in many cases it is also a contributing cause of the former. In this connection it was noted also that only in Negro unions or mixed unions dominated by a majority of Negro members do Negro officers actually perform the duties of their office. In cases where Negro members do succeed in becoming officers in mixed locals dominated by a large majority of white members, they are cunningly ignored and pushed aside by fellow white officers.

A consideration of the question of meeting the obligations and sharing in the benefits of union membership by Negro members also led to interesting findings. Generally Negroes are regular dues-paying members for they realize that a requisite to employment is often union membership which can be maintained mainly by prompt payment of dues. On the other hand, they do not enjoy, on the whole, equality of opportunity to share the benefits of union membership—security on the job, improved working conditions and opportunity for new employment. This is particularly true in short-time or seasonal work and in work where the selection of the workers, union members, is usually in the hands of one individual—a foreman, a section manager, etc. However, on long-time jobs on which Negroes are employed when organized they usually continue to hold on under the protection of their union.

The strike activity of Negro union members during and immediately following the N.R.A. period was strikingly different from that of previous years. They were no longer the weak union members who refused to walk out with their fellow unionists. On the contrary, they were the loyal union members. In this connection it was also observed that the role of the Negro worker as a strike breaker has about come to an end in Manhattan because the major cause for such activity, exclusion from some labor unions and limitations on membership in others, is gradually being removed.

The foregoing facts and conclusions warrant two further conclusions—of a more general nature. First, the labor union situation in Manhattan as it affects Negroes is similar to that in the United States as a whole. In Manhattan there is represented every type of labor union relation, practice and policy in regard to Negro workers, as was found by investigators (mentioned in the preface) to exist in the United States. It has already been pointed out above that these practices vary from acceptance of Negro workers into membership on an equal basis with white workers, as in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, to a complete exclusion of Negro workers by constitutional provision as in the Masters, Mates and Pilots of America, the railroad Brotherhoods and others. Between those two extremes are the unions that put Negro workers in separate locals or in auxiliary bodies responsible to white unions, those that neither discourage nor encourage Negro workers to join their ranks and those organized independently by Negro workers. Just as the absence of membership or limitations on full membership of Negroes in unions over the entire United States produced the net result of their not being able to gain a prominent position in the industrial life of the American people, so did the same conditions in Manhattan prevent Negro workers there from gaining a desirable place in the local labor

movement and industrial life. Lack of organization has deprived them of the means whereby they could maintain proper standards of living and assure themselves of sufficient power to combat low wages, deplorable working conditions, unjust discrimination and, in general, all forms of injustice. However, although there is this similarity between Manhattan conditions and national conditions, there is some difference in degree. In Manhattan conditions are not quite so serious as in the United States as a whole.

Finally, it is becoming increasingly evident that if labor is to conserve and add to the gains already made, the Negro workers must become more truly an integral part of the labor movement—both local and national. Organized labor must put aside its traditional attitude toward Negro workers as a special class of workers, for there can be no solidarity of workers—and that is a basic factor in determining the complete success of any organized labor movement—if one is considered as a black worker and another as a white worker; all should be regarded merely as workers. The fundamental labor problems of all workers are the same; all are interested in better working conditions, shorter working hours, increased wages, security on the job and protection against exploitation by employers of labor who are primarily interested in bargaining to get the greatest quantity of efficient labor at the lowest possible cost. Just as there is no longer a place in the labor movement of an industrial center for individual bargaining, there is no place for bargaining of individual groups of workers in the same crafts, trades or professions, divided along racial lines. That greater and more effective results can be obtained through a strong, single group action has been convincingly demonstrated by the activities of the Manhattan Locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union during and just after the close of the N.R.A. period. In these all workers have come together

in mixed locals as workers and fellow unionists sharing alike the benefits, obligations and hardships of union endeavor. Negro workers have come to understand more fully the principles and methods of trade unionism, while white workers have come to a better understanding of Negroes as workers. Together they are participating in the privileges and responsibilities of union membership and are fighting to gain and maintain desirable standards of employment.

An example well worth the emulation of other labor unions in Manhattan and in the United States!

## APPENDIX I

EXCERPTS, SHOWING OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEGROES IN NEW YORK CITY, FROM A PAPER—"THE NEGRO AT WORK IN NEW YORK CITY"—DELIVERED BY FRANKLIN J. KELLER, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CONFERENCE, AT THE CONFERENCE ON THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE NEGRO, HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., MAY 11-13, 1933

### . . . THE PRINTER

The printing industry is one of the most highly organized industries in New York City. Most of the large establishments employ only union workers. Three types of printing and publishing establishments exist: (1) the union shop, (2) the open shop which employs union and non-union men and pays the union wage scale, and (3) the non-union shop.

In attempting to discover the opportunities for the Negro in the printing trade three agencies were used: (1) the white employer, (2) the Negro employer, and (3) labor unions. . . .

### WHITE EMPLOYERS WITH UNION SHOPS

Twenty-nine of the white employers operated union shops. Nine of this group employed thirteen Negro workers. Five were employed as pressmen, while eight were employed as compositors. Of the eight compositors, three were linotypers and five were hand compositors. All the employers of the union shop group found the Negro worker unsatisfactory. Eight found him regular and dependable. In every case it was found that he worked along with whites and received equal pay.



## WHITE EMPLOYERS WITH OPEN SHOPS

Nine white employers, who conducted open shops, were interviewed. These employers engaged both union and non-union labor but maintained the union wage scale. Eight Negro printers were employed in four of these establishments. These employers expressed satisfaction with their work, one stated that he found the Negro willing to do more than the white worker. Each employer in this group felt the need for more and better training among the workmen. One Negro was an assistant foreman in a shop employing twenty-two men. It was evident from the interviews that employees were, in almost every case, engaged through friends and relatives of other employees. Two employers had never used a Negro in any capacity. One had heard that the Negro was not dependable and was not to be trusted. Another believed that the Negro could not do any work which required skill. He felt the Negro should remain on the farms or do the jobs which did not exact mental activity or skill.

## WHITE EMPLOYERS WITH NON-UNION SHOPS

Eleven white employers operated non-union shops and employed eighteen Negro printers. Three were employed as pressmen, seven were hand compositors, and eight were linotypers. Eight employers readily admitted that Negro workers were not paid the same wage scale as the whites. One photo engraver stated that he had employed a Negro photo engraver for nine years. This Negro, he claims, had learned a part of his trade in England and had completed it while in his employment. Nine employers found the Negro a regular and satisfactory worker. Two felt that he compared favorably with the whites, being no better or no worse. They had found no labor entirely satisfactory. One employer believed that the failure to satisfy was due to his low wage scale, since the better workmen entered the union and better paying shops, while the other was convinced that labor at any price was no longer satisfactory since all laborers seek the highest wage while doing the least possible amount of work.

## NEGRO EMPLOYERS

Sixty-nine Negro employers were interviewed. They employed a total of one hundred and sixty-five Negro workmen and two whites. None of the Negro employers or employees were members of the unions. Two employers had been members but had withdrawn their membership. One stated that he had discontinued membership because of discrimination encountered. This led him to open his own establishment. The wage scale in the Negro printing offices ranged from twenty to forty dollars per week. Nineteen of the establishments conducted by Negro employers were one-man shops, the owner doing all the work, occasionally employing a helper. Twenty-five employed one man, eleven employed two men, nine employed three men, four employed four men, and one employed six men.

THE NEGRO IS OBTAINING A FOOTHOLD IN THE PRINTING  
INDUSTRY

The facts established on the foregoing statements are conclusive evidence that despite reluctance on the part of some white employers and an indifferent though not hostile attitude of the printing unions in New York City, the Negro printer is obtaining a foothold. The white employer, who has been doubtful of the Negro's ability to do his work and fearful of this white employer's objection to the presence of the Negro workman is slowly changing his attitude. The success of the few workers is establishing confidence in the employers. The twenty-nine employees interviewed were unanimous in the belief that their opportunities were increasing each year.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD UNIONS

There were great differences in the attitudes of the men toward the unions. Some felt that the unions had been helpful in assuring more work and higher wages. They believed that they received employment, through the unions, in places which would ordinarily exclude them because of their color. On the other hand, there were strong expressions of bitterness towards

the unions, both by union and non-union men. Some union men declared they were given work only when the union wished to avoid giving them relief. Others stated that the unions discriminated against Negroes in their entrance examinations. The officials, they stated, would seek petty excuses for failing them in tests offered. A Negro, they said, had to be superior to the average white printer to enter the union. Still others felt that, after paying the large entrance fees and monthly dues to the union, they were no better off financially than they were when employed in non-union shops at lower wages. "If," one stated, "the unions practiced the policy of fairness and equality for all its members, then the unions and the Negro could unite in their efforts to improve the conditions of the working man;" the general opinion, however, was that the relations between the Negro and the unions were slowly improving.

#### SHEET METAL WORKERS

Thirty-two sheet metal contractors were interviewed. Twenty-six of them conducted union shops. No Negro was employed in any of these shops because there were no members of the Sheet Metal Union. A few men were employed in the United States Navy Yard in Brooklyn and a few Negroes might be found in small non-union shops scattered about the city, but generally speaking, sheet metal work was for Negroes in New York City a non-existent trade.

#### MACHINISTS

The Negro machinist encountered experiences similar to those of the sheet metal worker. The United States Navy Yard at Brooklyn operates an apprentice school in connection with its several shops. This school is affiliated with the Board of Education of New York City. Seven Negro apprentices have attended the school and five of them have completed the course. Three of this number are at present employed as machinists at the Navy Yard. Visits were made to forty-nine employers operating factories which produce almost every conceivable small metal product from screws, bolts, office equip-

ment, lamps, ornaments, small machinery, parts of small and large machinery to parts of motors. These factories were scattered over Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. They employed from four to sixty men, sixty percent of the employees were skilled machinists, thirty percent were semi-skilled and ten percent were unskilled laborers. Twenty-three of these employers engaged twenty-six Negro machinists, nine semi-killed mechanics and seventeen unskilled laborers.

#### THE AUTO MECHANIC

At the beginning of this investigation it was soon disclosed that very few Negroes were employed in the large service stations of New York, but that they were employed in considerable numbers in the small garages. Owners were interviewed of sixty-one white and eleven colored garages in Harlem and the immediate vicinity. Two Negro owners of taxicabs employed one hundred and fifty Negro chauffeurs, employed nineteen mechanics, seventeen of whom were colored and two were white. The total number of chauffeurs employed by them was five hundred and fifty. Twelve percent of the chauffeurs were white. All of the chauffeurs worked on a forty percent basis. These owners employed white chauffeurs because they felt (1) that as public carriers they sought white and Negro patrons, and should therefore offer work to both races and (2) that their policy might serve as an example to white taxicab owners. The office force of five men, and the fourteen washers and polishers were all Negroes.

No difficulty was experienced in talking with the automobile mechanics; all of them stated that they found sufficient work to enable them to make a living.

#### THE WORKER ON BUILDINGS

The information regarding workers in the building trades must be condensed into a few bare facts. There are ten Negroes employing plumbers in the city. In the Harlem district there are six Negro electrical contractors, and one electrical engineer, whose principle work is the repair of electrical motors. While

there are no Negro members of the plumbing or electrical unions, the plastering and carpentering trades are wide open for the Negro as he may join the unions without restrictions.

#### THE GARMENT WORKER

There are few Negro men in this industry. Most of them are pressers in the tailoring and repair shops or are tailors conducting small businesses in sections of the city where the population is predominantly Negro. A personal canvass of twenty firms showed the great majority of Negro women employees to be pressers, cleaners and finishers. These are the least desirable jobs of the industry and since they require little skill, they are low wage jobs. Although there were few operators in the sampling, interviews revealed that of the twenty employers eight were decidedly in favor of using Negro operators if these were available.

#### NEGRO WOMEN IN BEAUTY CULTURE

Beauty Culture is an expanding field for the employment of Negro women. Several Negroes have acquired great wealth in this field. With greater economic security has developed greater interest in personal care. Beauty parlors abound in the Negro communities of New York City. Many of these shops can be classified as first class. Two schools of beauty treatment report 250 shops each in the greater city where the proprietors are graduates of their systems. In New York City 1320 Negro females are listed by the census as barbers, hairdressers and manicurists.

#### THE FOOD TRADE WORKER

We are familiar with the fact that a trade may be a so-called traditional Negro trade in one state and a white trade in another. In New York we have the interesting situation where the same trade is traditionally Negro under one proprietor and anathema under another. In one chain of food stores, 641 Negroes are employed. They have a record for superior service, and the merit system is used without regard for color. In sharp

contrast to this situation is that presented by another organization in the same field. Both companies are among New York City's largest restaurant chains. No Negroes have been hired by this firm, number five, during its thirty-five years of existence. "This can readily be understood," said the personnel manager, "when one considers that the average mental age of the Negro is seven years."

#### THE NEGRO WORKER IN THE HOTEL

The hotel business presents a changing situation. A representative of the Hotel Bellmen's Association, a Negro organization of many years' standing, makes this statement: "Since large corporations have taken over the hotel business, the Negro has been displaced by whites. Each year fewer New York hotels employ colored help. "The first-class hotels do not hire them." The personnel manager of one of the hotels where Negroes have held their jobs, explains that this change is simply a "fad." Inefficiency of the Negro is not the cause. It is the style of the hotels at present to use white bellmen, elevator operators, and doormen. The manager of another hotel (number three) states that he prefers Negro help, for the white boy wishes to advance. He expresses admiration for the Negro who "stays in his place, . . ."

## APPENDIX II

### SYNOPSIS OF ACTIONS ON THE QUESTION OF NEGRO LABOR TAKEN BY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR CONVENTIONS

(Reviewed in its Proceedings of Conventions: pp. 217-222 in the 1932 Proceedings; pp. 193-195, 269-270 in the 1933 Proceedings; pp. 330-334 in the 1934 Proceedings; and pp. 808, 829 in the 1935 Proceedings.)

The question of non-recognition, discrimination and exclusion of Negro workers has been before the Federation from its organization in 1881 up to the present time. Many declarations have been made from time to time in favor of these workers showing that the American Federation of Labor welcomes and admits all classes of labor—skilled and unskilled—to its rank irrespective of creed, color, sex, race, or nationality—and although one Convention after another has spoken clearly and plainly on this matter it continually comes up.

In order that the position of the American Federation of Labor may be understood on this serious complaint, your committee believes it is now time to give a synopsis of the actions taken by previous Conventions of the American Federation of Labor over a period of half a century.

The call for the first Convention in 1881, among other things, specified that:

The time has now arrived for a more perfect combination of labor . . .

Thus we could elevate trades unionism and obtain for the working classes that respect for their right and that reward for their services, to which they are justly entitled . . .

That all international and national union, trades, assemblies or councils, and local trades or labor unions are hereby invited to send delegates to an International Trades Union Congress, to be held in Pittsburgh, Pa., on Tuesday, November 15, 1881.

## PREAMBLE

The preamble adopted at the first Convention 50 years ago, and at every Convention since, specifies, among other things, that:

The history of the wage workers of all countries is but the history of constant struggle and misery engendered by ignorance and disunion; whereas, the history of the non-producers of all ages proves that a minority, thoroughly organized, may work wonders for good or evil.

"It behooves the representatives of the workers of North America, in Congress assembled, to adopt such measures and disseminate such principles among the people of our country as will unite them for all time to come, the secure recognition of the rights to which they are justly entitled." Conforming to the old adage, "In union there is strength," the formation of a federation embracing every trade and labor organization in North America, a union founded upon a basis as broad as the land we live in, is our hope.

## 1881 CONVENTION

At that Convention, Mr. Gompers, Chairman of the Committee on Plan of Organization, reported as follows:

Article 1. This association shall be known as "The Federation of Organized Trades Unions of the United States of America and Canada."

This was amended to read—"The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada."

Mr. Grandison (colored delegate), of Pittsburgh, said: "We have in the city of Pittsburgh many men in our organization who have no particular trade, but should not be excluded from the federation. Our object is, as I understand it, to federate the whole laboring element of America. I speak more particularly with a knowledge of my own people, and declare to you that it would be dangerous to skilled mechanics to exclude from this organization the common laborers, who might, in an emergency be employed in positions they could readily qualify themselves to fill."

The amendment was adopted.



At the Convention held in Columbus, Ohio, in 1886 when the name was changed, it was a difficult matter to select a suitable title. All were satisfied with the name "Federation"; however, they did not want to carry the names "United States and Canada" if it could be avoided.

It was suggested that the word "America" would cover both countries. This was agreed to, but how to include all labor—skilled and unskilled, irrespective of creed, color, or nationality—was a stumbling block.

The conclusion reached, however, was that the word "Labor" covers all classes of workers, and this seemed to be a happy solution of a vexed and annoying problem.

It was there and then decided that in the future the name should be "The American Federation of Labor."

#### DECLARATIONS OF AFOL CONVENTIONS

Detroit, Mich., 1890.

RESOLVED, That it is the sense of this Convention, and it looks with disfavor upon trade unions having provisions which exclude from membership persons on account of race or color, and that we most respectfully request that the National Machinists' Union remove from their constitution such conditions, so that all machinists shall be eligible to membership.

Philadelphia, Pa., 1892.

Your Committee, to which was referred the request of Mr. Harry E. Easton, Grand Foreman and Organizer of the International Association of Machinists, begs leave to report that Mr. Easton appeared before us, and after some discussion expressed himself well satisfied with the position of the A. F. of L. as regards their association and the efforts of our Executive Council to unite the whole craft.

He also stated his belief that the coming annual Convention of said association would eliminate the color line so strenuously objected to by this Federation.

We therefore recommend that our President be instructed to visit the coming Conventions of both organizations in the interests of harmony and unity.

Chicago, Ill., 1893.

**RESOLVED**, That this Convention heartily endorses the present movement of the International Machinists' Association to drop the color line from their constitution and that the delegates of this Convention be urged to use their best endeavors to convince the locals of the association to agree to the proposition in question in order to bring about harmony in the machinists' organizations of this country.

1893.

**RESOLVED**, We deplore the introduction of any sectarian or captious side issues among the working people. Such movements are destined to divide labor's forces and produce bitter antagonism as they produce religious bigotry, provoke rancorous intolerance, and divert the working people from working out their own emancipation from the galling slavery of the present social and political conditions.

**RESOLVED**, That we here and now reaffirm as one of the cardinal principles of the labor movement that the working people must unite and organize, irrespective of creed, color, sex, nationality or politics.

Denver, 1894.

Educate the masses that are not with us to join their respective trade unions, in order that we may confront the enemy with an ever-increasing unity of action that will enable the wage workers everywhere, regardless of creed, color or country, to assert their rights and boldly maintain them.

1894.

A resolution identical to the one adopted in the 1893 Convention quoted in the foregoing was unanimously reaffirmed.

New York, 1895.

**RESOLVED**, That the Executive Council be and they are hereby directed immediately upon the adjournment of the Convention to issue an address to the wage workers of the country, urging them to join the unions of their respective trades or callings, wherever such unions exist, and to form unions where there are none such now, with the view of securing for them all possible advantages accruing from organization.

In 1897 it was reported that Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee University had made the statement that the trade unions were obstructing the economic progress of Negroes by refusing them admission to their organizations.

At the Convention held that year in Nashville, Tenn., the following resolution was adopted:

**RESOLVED**, That the American Federation of Labor reaffirms its declaration that it welcomes to its ranks all labor without regard to creed, color, sex, race or nationality, and that its best efforts have been, and will continue to be, to encourage the organization of those most needing its protection, whether they be in the North or the South, the East or the West, white or black, and that we denounce as untrue, and without foundation in fact, the reported statement of Mr. Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee University, to the effect that the trade unions were placing obstacles in the way of the material advancement of the Negro, and that we appeal to the records of the Conventions of the American Federation of Labor and especially to the records of the Chicago Convention, as the most complete answer to any and all such assertions.

At the Convention held in Louisville, Ky., in 1900, the question of recognition of the Negro was again up and received careful consideration, after which it was decided that the trade-union movement is open to all classes of workers regardless of race, sex, nationality, creed or color.

It was further decided that the A. F. of L. grant charters to separate Local Unions and Central Bodies of colored workers.

In the belief that men of their race could organize the Negro workers, the American Federation of Labor, prior to the World War, had three organizers in the field but they made very little headway, practically none. The Negro workers did not show a willingness nor a desire to belong to the trade-union movement.

At the Buffalo (N. Y.) Convention held in 1917, two resolutions were introduced asking that colored organizers be appointed to organize the Negro workers, but previous experience along this line did not justify such action.

At the St. Paul (Minn.) Convention held in 1918, the Executive Council made the following report on Organization of Colored Workers:

Several resolutions were brought before the Buffalo Convention having their object the better organization of the colored workers. One of the earliest declarations of the American Federation of Labor was, "That it is the duty of the working people of the United States to organize and cooperate for the protection of all the workers without regard to nationality, sex, politics, color or religion."

The constitution provides for the organization of separate unions of colored workers when that course is deemed desirable and most advantageous and for the formation of central labor unions representing local unions of these workers. At every Convention of The A. F. of L. for the past 30 years there have been colored delegates and they have received the same treatment of cordiality, courtesy and fraternity as any white man could expect.

At our meeting in February, the first meeting at headquarters after the Buffalo Convention, we notified the following of our meeting and invited them to confer with us regarding plans for the organization of colored wage-earners:

R. R. Moton, Principal, Tuskegee Institute.

John R. Shillady, Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Fred R. Moore, Editor, *New York Age*.

Archibald Grimke, Washington Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Emmett J. Scott, Special Assistant to the Secretary of War.

Eugene Kinckle Jones, Executive Secretary, National League.

Thos. Jesse Jones, Educational Director, Phelps-Stokes Fund.

These representatives of the colored workers asked that when organizing their race there should be included skilled as well as unskilled workmen, those from the North as well as from the

South, employees of the government together with civilian employees, women as well as men.

We referred the subject to President Gompers with authority to appoint a committee representing the A. F. of L. to meet with a like committee representing the colored workers for further consideration of plans and policies.

The Committee thus appointed met in joint conference at headquarters April 22nd and the subject was comprehensively discussed.

The whole plan, work and desires of the A. F. of L. in regard to the organization of colored workers were laid before the representatives of the colored people at the conference. They were greatly impressed, so that they finally declared that they would issue a statement addressed jointly to the A. F. of L. and to the colored workers, calling upon the latter to organize into bona fide unions of labor and to become part of the existing trade unions, or to organize into purely colored workers' unions in full affiliation in spirit and fact with the A. F. of L.

The declaration referred to was never issued, or if it was, the A. F. of L. never received a copy.

At the same time the following communication was received from a committee representing various organizations of colored people:

New York, June 6, 1918.

Hon. Samuel Gompers, President,  
American Federation of Labor,  
Washington, D. C.

My Dear Mr. Gompers—We write to present suggestions for further cooperation between our Committee and the American Federation of Labor as growing out of our recent conference in Washington.

First, we wish to place before you our understanding of your statement to us at the conclusion of the meeting. We quote you as follows; and we will be glad for you to make any changes in the text as will make the statement more nearly conform to the ideas which you have in mind relative to the connections that should be established between white and Negro workingmen:

"We, the American Federation of Labor, welcome Negro workingmen to the ranks of organized labor. We should like to see more of them join us. The interests of workingmen, white and black, are common. Together we must fight unfair wages, unfair hours and bad conditions of labor. At times it is difficult for the national organization to control the actions of local unions in difficulties arising within the trades in any particular community, inasmuch as the National body is made possible by the delegates appointed by the locals; but we can and will use our influence to break down prejudice on account of race, color or previous conditions of servitude, and hope that you will use your influence to show Negro workingmen the advantages of collective bargaining and the value of affiliation with the American Federation of Labor. But few people who are not thoroughly acquainted with the rapid growth of the Federation of Labor know of the large numbers of colored people who are already members of our organization. The unpleasant incidents in connection with efforts of colored men to get recognition in trades controlled by the American Federation of Labor have been aired and the good effects of wholesome and healthy relationship have not been given publicity; and for that reason a general attitude of suspicion has been developed towards union labor on the part of colored working people; but I hope that out of this conference will spring a more cordial feeling of confidence in each other on the part of men who must work for a living."

We are living to co-operate with the American Federation of Labor in bringing about the results of the recent conference, and would make the following suggestions and recommendations which, with your approval, we shall proceed to carry out to the best of our ability.

First, we suggest that you prepare a statement, along the lines of the quotation from you given above, and send it to us for approval and then to be given to the Negro press throughout the country as expressing your position on matters connected with the relationship between Negro and white workingmen.

This statement, in our judgment, should contain a clear exposition of the reasons why certain internationals may exclude colored men as they do by constitutional provision and still be affiliated with the American Federation of Labor whose declared principles are opposed by such discrimination. This we think necessary because the stated facts above alluded to will be familiar to the leaders among the colored people, particularly to colored editors and ministers whose co-operation it is essential to secure if the best results are to be obtained.

We would suggest further that you consider the expediency of recommending to such internationals as still exclude colored men that their constitution be revised in this respect.

Second, that a qualified colored man to handle men and organize them be selected for employment as an organizer of the American Federation of Labor, his salary and expenses, of course, to be paid by the American Federation of Labor.

Third, that for the present we meet at least once a quarter to check up on the results of our co-operative activities and to plan for further extension of the work, if satisfactorily conducted.

Fourth, that you carry out your agreement to have your Executive Council voice an advanced position in its attitude towards the organization of Negro workingmen and have these sentiments endorsed by your St. Paul Convention in June, and this action be given the widest possible publicity throughout the country.

We should be glad to hear from you at your earliest convenience as to the action taken by your Council on these recommendations with such other suggestions or recommendations as may occur to you.

Sincerely yours,

EUGENE KINCKLE JONES

FRED R. MOORE

For the following Committee:

Dr. R. R. Moton, Principal Tuskegee Institute.

J. R. Shillady, Secretary of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Fred R. Moore, Editor, *New York Age*.

Archibald Grimke, Washington Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Emmett J. Scott, Special Assistant to Secretary of War.

Eugene Kinckle Jones, Executive Secretary, National Urban League.

Thomas Jesse Jones, Educational Director, Phelps-Stokes Fund.

Dr. James H. Dillard, President of Jenes Fund.

Dr. Geo. C. Hall, Vice-President, Executive Board, Chicago Urban League.

The report of the Executive Council as well as this communication was referred to the Committee on Organization and was reported on as follows:

Upon that portion of the report of the Executive Council under the caption "Organization of Colored Workers" the Committee reported as follows:

This part of the Executive Council's report deals with conferences of leading men of the colored race with President Gompers and the Executive Council relative to the organizing of the colored workers, both skilled and unskilled, under the jurisdiction of the American Federation of Labor, and their promise to assist and co-operate in that work.

It is with pleasure we learn that leaders of the colored race realize the necessity of organizing the workers of that race into unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and your Committee recommends that the President of the American Federation of Labor and its Executive Council give special attention to organizing the colored wage workers in the future. We wish it understood, however, that in doing so no fault is or can be found with the work done in the past, but we believe that with the cooperation of the leaders of that race much better results can be accomplished.

The report of the Committee was adopted unanimously.

The Committee recommends that the communication, signed by a number of representatives of associations of colored people, read in the Convention and printed in the third day's proceedings



(Page 108) be referred to the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor for such actions as they deem necessary.

The report of the Committee was concurred in.

At the 39th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor held in Atlantic City, N. J., in June 1919, five resolutions were introduced relative to and dealing with the organization of colored workers and their admission to Local Unions of national and international unions and to the American Federation of Labor.

These resolutions were referred to the Committee on Organization. That Committee reported as follows:

A lengthy hearing was had on these resolutions, at which everybody interested appeared and discussed the subject matter contained therein from all viewpoints.

Many international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor admit colored workers to membership and in so doing protect their rights and interests. Some organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor refuse admittance to colored workers, which brings about the present complaints. In such cases your Committee recommends that the American Federation of Labor organize these colored workers under charters from the American Federation of Labor.

After a lengthy debate and a poll taken of the International Unions having colored workers as members, the report and recommendation of the Committee was adopted.

At the 40th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, held in Montreal, Can., in June, 1920, three resolutions were introduced dealing with the organizing and admission of colored workers to Local Unions of national and international labor organizations. These resolutions were again referred to the Committee on Organization, and were reported on as follows:

"Your Committee gave a lengthy hearing to all parties interested on the subject matter contained in these resolutions. In the course of the hearing it developed that some few international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor do not as yet admit colored workers to membership. It also developed that the majority and by far the greater

majority, of the international unions do admit colored workers to membership, and that these colored workers are entitled to the same rights, benefits and privileges that the other members enjoy. On account of these few international unions refusing colored workers admission, exception is taken. Your Committee, however, calls your attention to the action of the Atlantic City Convention of the American Federation of Labor last year on this subject, :

"Where international unions refuse to admit colored workers to membership, the American Federation of Labor be authorized to organize them under charters from the American Federation of Labor.

"We, therefore, reaffirm our former action on this matter, at the same time calling attention to the fact that the American Federation of Labor does not organize workers of any trade or calling along racial lines."

In the course of the debate that followed it was decided that national and international unions remove from their laws the words "only white" where such exist.

Delegate Sweeney, of the Tailors, asked: If it was not contrary to the principles of the American Federation of Labor to allow an affiliated union to draw the color line.

Vice-President Duncan replied that: The American Federation of Labor ever since its formation, has stood for organization without reference to color. It so stands today.

It is needless to say that as far as the American Federation of Labor is concerned all its influence will be used to have such a change made because the American Federation of Labor cannot be expected to favor an affiliated body that discriminates against a man on account of his color.

Delegate Duffy, Chairman of the Committee said: When the American Federation of Labor issues charters to colored workers, no matter of what trade or calling, the American Federation of Labor becomes the international union of those members. It is the duty of the American Federation to take up the grievances of those workers. Out of 110 national and international

organizations affiliated with the American Federation, more than 100 admit colored workers to membership.

The report of the Committee was adopted.

At the 50th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, held in Boston, Mass., in October, 1930, Delegate Randolph (colored) in behalf of the Pullman Porters, said:

We have been waging a campaign of education. President Green has addressed several meetings of our union in New York and Chicago. He gave a very forceful convincing and logical dissertation on our work in the interests of getting a successful consummation of our case. Those addresses of President Green were disseminated throughout the Negro press and also in the daily papers. We have been able to increase our forces and we are constantly making headway.

Our movement has won for the members an increase of ten dollars in the last five years. That is not much but it is something, and as a result of the indirect pressure we were able to exact that from the Pullman Company.

We are calling upon this Convention to use its influence in helping to carry forward this organization. We hope the central councils in the various cities will help us in our organization work. Some of them have already helped us — Vice-President James Wilson, of Cincinnati, has done and is about to do some work of our organization. We have also been helped in Louisville and a number of other places, and I am confident that with the militant spirit and determination on the part of the Pullman porters we are certain to win.

The laws of the American Federation of Labor now in force and effect specify in Article XI, Section 6, that:

“Separate charters may be issued to Central Unions, Local Unions, or Federal Labor Unions, composed exclusively of colored members, where, in the judgment of the Executive Council, it appears advisable and to the best interest of the trade-union movement to do so.”

After all that has been said and done in the last half century we have the matter before us again. Your Committee reiterates, re-endorses and reaffirms all the actions taken and the

decisions rendered by the American Federation of Labor on this subject.

We repeat that: All the workers of the United States and Canada—skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled are eligible to admission to the American Federation of Labor irrespective of creed, color, nationality, sex or politics. We welcome them into our midst. We will be glad to have them with us as that is the only way in which their and our rights and interests can be advanced and protected.

[The 1933 Convention witnessed the introduction and endorsement of several other resolutions concerning Negro labor. The purpose of these were a Protest Against Negro Workers Under N.R.A., a further request for Equal Rights for Negro Workers and a request for the use of Negro Labor Organizers by the American Federation of Labor.

In the 1934 Convention similar actions were taken; however, this time a resolution which brought forth a little result was introduced. It requested that a committee of five be appointed to investigate the status of Negroes in American Federation of Labor Unions. Subsequently, said committee was appointed by the president and Executive Council of the A. F. of L.

The outstanding feature on Negro Labor of the 1935 Convention was the Report of the Committee of Five, discussion by a Negro delegate which shows how it was accepted and, finally, a resolution for the further functioning of this committee. These follow:]

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
COLORED WORKERS

The 1934 San Francisco Convention of the American Federation of Labor directed the president to appoint a committee of five to investigate the conditions of the colored workers of this country. Pursuant to this direction, a committee consisting of John E. Rooney, Operative Plasters and Cement Finishers, John Brophy, United Mine Workers of America, John W. Garvey, International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers' Union, Jerry L. Hanks, The Journeymen Barbers

International Union and T. C. Carroll, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees were appointed.

The Committee conducted an investigation and obtained considerable information on the subject. Opportunity was afforded those interested to present their views.

The report of the Committee indicates that there are a few National and international Unions that deny membership to Negroes. In most of these instances special provisions are made to organize the Negroes into Federal Labor unions directly chartered by the American Federation of Labor. In some National and International Unions admitting Negroes they are placed in separate local unions with varying rights of membership.

We are of the opinion that since each affiliated National and International Union has complete autonomy that the welfare of the Negro worker will be best served by a campaign of education of white workers to bring to them the necessity of solidarity in the ranks of the workers and the voluntary elimination of all restrictions against full rights of membership to the Negro.

The American Federation of Labor has consistently advocated the organization of all workers and we reaffirm that policy. The economic welfare of the workers can best be served by complete unity of purpose and action. We therefore recommend—

That all National and International Unions and the American Federation of Labor conduct a continuous campaign of education to bring to the white worker the necessity for greater unity of the workers in the labor movement to the end that all discrimination against negroes will be removed.

Your committee has considered the Supplemental Report of the Executive Council dealing with the Committee having investigated the conditions of the colored workers of this country and recommends concurrence in the Executive Council's report.

Delegate Randolph, Sleeping Car Porters: Mr. Chairman and delegates to the convention of the American Federation of Labor—the report of the Executive Council I consider quite inadequate: it does not meet the issue in any respect, and, in the first place, it has not followed the procedure laid down by

the San Francisco Convention. I wish to read from the records of the San Francisco Convention relating to this question.

In that Convention delegate Hutcheson, Carpenters, asked: "What was the final recommendation of the Committee?" The organization Committee non-concurred in the resolution, which dealt with discrimination against Negro workers.

Then Delegate Hucheson moved as an amendment: "Therefore, I move as an amendment to the Committee's report that there be a committee of five appointed by the President of the American Federation of Labor to investigate the conditions of the colored workers of this country and report to the next convention."

That report was not made here by the committee which was appointed by President Green. President Green appointed five persons on that committee as follows: John G. Rooney, Operative Plasterers and Cement Finishers; John Brophy, United Mine Workers of America; John Garvey, International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers Union; Jerry L. Hanks, Journeymen Barbers International Union; and P. C. Carroll, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. These were the men who were appointed on that committee. They were bona fide trade unionists, men in organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The Committee met in Washington and held hearings for two days. Representatives of various Negro organizations appeared and presented data with regard to discrimination against Negro workers. The committee considered the recommendation for holding regional hearings in the centers where Negroes were in great numbers working at various industries, New York, St. Louis, Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago—places of that sort. The committee made its recommendation to the Executive Council. The Executive Council appointed one of its members to make the report of the matter. That is the report, but the recommendations of the committee appointed by President Green are not in this report. I think they should be included. As a matter of fact, this report of the Executive Council I will regard as merely a dignified, diplomatic camouflage.

This is the report which was made by the committee appointed by President Green, signed by four of the members of the committee of five. It reads:

"First, That all International Unions, who bar Negroes from membership in any way or discriminate against them through separate local systems or forbid them representation at conventions or on committees, will take up the Negro question at their next convention for the purpose of harmonizing constitution, rules and practices to conform with the oft-repeated declaration of A. F. of L. conventions on equality of treatment of all races within the trade union movement.

"Second. All charters issued by A. F. of L. shall be in conformity with both declared policy and law on the subject of membership.

"Third. The A. F. of L. through its officers, the American Federationists, A. F. of L. weekly News Service, Workers Education Bureau and other mediums, conduct a continuous active campaign of education within the trade union movement on the weakness of division and the necessity of greater trade union unity between white and black workers to the end that all workers may be organized.

Respectfully submitted,

"John E. Rooney,

"John Brohpy,

"T. C. Carroll,

"John W. Garvey."

Now I want to know why these recommendations were not included in this report and presented to this convention. As a matter of fact, the motion in the San Francisco Convention provided that both recommendation and findings should be presented to this convention. And, by the way, the findings are important because they represent the basis upon which those conclusions were drawn.

RESOLUTION NO. 153—BY DELEGATE A. PHILLIP RANDOLPH,  
SLEEPING CAR PORTERS, 18068, NEW YORK CITY

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“WHEREAS, The Fifty-fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, in San Francisco, adopted a resolution for the appointment by President William Green of a committee of five for the purpose of making an inquiry into the practices of discrimination by trade unions affiliated with the A. F. of L. against Negro workers, and to make recommendations to the next or this Convention; and

WHEREAS, President Green appointed the said committee composed of the following brothers: John E. Rooney, of the Plasterers; John Brophy, of the Miners; T. C. Carroll, of the Maintenance of Way; John W. Garvey, of the Hod Carriers; Hanks, of the Barbers, who have undertaken a splendid, far-reaching and constructive job of investigating every aspect of the relationship of the black workers to the American Federation of Labor; and

WHEREAS, The Committee held two hearings in Washington, D. C. and listened to testimony given by Negro and white representatives from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the joint Committee on National Recovery, the National Urban League, the Department of Interior, Howard and Fisk Universities, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and skilled Negro building trades workers, who gave a mass of factual data, pointing out the widespread practice, on the part of some trade unions, to discriminate against Negro workers through the color bar in their constitutions and color pledges in their rituals and other inexpressed but subtle and effective methods of excluding colored workers from the unions and thereby keeping them out of employment; and

WHEREAS, The Life of the Committee has been too short, having only started work in July of 1935, giving it about three months to function, hold hearings, take evidence, study and analyze the material that is presented to it or that it may search out for evaluation, itself, especially, in view of the magnitude and vital significance of the task before it; and



WHEREAS, Negro workers have neither the money or time to travel to Washington to tell their story of discrimination visited upon them to prevent them from becoming members of the union, or work on union jobs and since if they left their homes they would be cut off relief because of absence, and because Washington is not an industrial city where large numbers of Negro craftsmen live who might appear and testify before the Committee and, too, since the increase and accumulation of evidence of discriminations, of varied forms, which enable the Committee to get a clear and complete picture of the Negro workers' relation to the trade union movement, which will have great factual value and moral weight and worth; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Federation of Labor in its Fifty-fifth Annual Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, empower and instruct President Green and the Executive Council, to provide the Committee with the necessary funds with which to conduct regional public hearings, to take evidence on the aforementioned discriminations, in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati and St. Louis, in order that Negro workers in these large industrial centers may appear and tell the Committee their experiences in seeking membership in the unions, and work on jobs controlled by organized labor. This will serve as a gesture of sincere interest on the part of the A. F. of L. to organize Negro workers, and will bring to the Federation increasing moral assurance and spiritual force, public goodwill and economic power, which is born alone in working class solidarity, without regard to race, color or nationality."

[Report of the Committee on Resolutions:]

Your committee recommends that the resolution be referred to the Executive Council and that hearings be provided for in such cities as the Executive Council may determine.

[Action of the Executive Council:]

The Executive Council amended the committee's report by striking out the last section calling for meetings in various localities and with this amendment approved the committee's report.

**APPENDIX III**  
**PART II OF**  
**PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION**  
**AND**  
**UNION STATUS OF NEGROES IN NEW YORK CITY**  
**PREPARED BY**  
**THE LABOR BUREAU, INC.**  
**FOR THE**  
**NEW YORK BRANCH OF THE URBAN LEAGUE**  
**(1925—See Note 50, Page 99)**

**PART II.** The following comments concerning the situation in New York City were evoked during interviews:

**A. Working Conditions of Negroes. . .**

**I. Skill.**

As may be seen from the census reports, the major occupations of colored workers are in the unskilled trades. Even under the general classification of skilled trades, a number of union officials state that the Negroes were in unskilled or semi-skilled branches. In several instances, the census and union classification of occupations did not therefore, correctly apply to the colored worker. The census, for example, lists 289 painters, glaziers and varnishers, but these are apparently occupied in white-washing. White-washers do not come under the jurisdiction of the Painters' and Decorators' union.

The officers of both the stationary firemen and stationary engineers said that Negroes were more apt to be found tending low-pressure fires, and doing jobs (porters) during the rest of the time. There are practically no Negroes employed as engineers in the ice plants and other large commercial houses of the city. Colored elevator operators are chiefly in apart-

ment houses, rather than in large office buildings. In this case also, their hours and their occupations tend to be less definite.

The organizer of the Tailors' Union said that 533 Negroes listed as "Tailors" in the census were probably all in valet service, i. e., cleaning, pressing and repairing. Valet service is not included in the New York local of Journeymen Tailor's Union. The only cleaners and dyers organization in the city is a Jewish union which has no colored members.

The same situation is found in the case of women workers. In the women's clothing industry, colored women are in the unskilled and semi-skilled trades; in the laundries, they are chiefly markers and sorters. The great majority of colored women, including those listed as waitresses, are in domestic service.

According to Mr. deChabert, Assistant Superintendent of the Harlem Branch of the New York State Department of Labor, Employment Service, the preponderance of Negroes in the unskilled trades is partly due to the fact that skilled colored men are obliged to accept and to apply for jobs requiring less skill, because they are unable to obtain more suitable employment. This opinion is supported by a statement of Mr. Robinson of the Brotherhood of Railroad and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees, who said that about 50 per cent of baggage-men and about 10 per cent of freight handlers in the Grand Central Terminal were Negroes, and that they were probably a better educated group than the white men who were filling similar positions.

## II. Rates of Pay.

Where colored men are organized, they receive the same rate of pay as organized white men for the same type of work. This was specifically emphasized in the case of the building trades, stationary firemen, teamsters, chauffeurs and longshoremen. Although there are no colored men in the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees, Negroes are included in labor agreements and decisions of the Railroad Labor Board. Their grievances are handled by the Clerks' organization. The only

class of labor to which Labor Board decisions are not applicable are the Station Porters (Red Caps) who are excluded from Railroad employees on a technicality that they work for a "gratuity" rather than a wage.

It was the consensus of opinion that unorganized Negroes received the same rates of pay as unorganized white men. Mr. deChabert thought that this was not always true in the case of unskilled labor, though the instance he mentioned (trackmen on the New York Central Railroad) is probably due to the fact that the white men are organized. Colored women in domestic service by the day receive the same pay as white women.

### III. Apprenticeship.

One reason for the lack of colored men in the highly skilled trades may be found in the fact that a number of unions do not encourage or train Negro apprentices. Nevertheless, a certain term of apprenticeship is required before union membership is granted. This is true specifically, in New York City, in the case of many building trades, stationary engineers, and tailors.

### B. Organization of Colored Workers.

#### I. Responsiveness to Organization.

Most union officials agreed that there was great initial resistance to be overcome in attempting to organize Negro workers than in the case of white men. This was ascribed largely to shorter industrial experience, great industrial exploitation and consequent suspicion and fear on the part of the Negro. Most union officers also stated that when they had been organized they were loyal members. Where the practice is to organize a trade by jobs, practically no difficulty was encountered in organization of Negroes who were in a union shop.

#### II. Use of Negroes as Strike-Breakers.

The following organizations mentioned that Negroes had been used by employers in attempting to break a strike.

1. Building Trades—1919. Mr. Calloran of the Building Trades Council said that this caused some hard feeling among concrete workers and the building trade groups.

2. Teamsters—1910. New York City Negroes were used to break a strike. These same Negroes were organized five or six years later, however, when "the soreness had worn off."

3. Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees. Negroes were used to take the places of white men during the outlaw strike of 1912. This gave them seniority preference over the white men whose places they had taken.

During the recent shopmen's strike, Negroes were promoted and introduced into new positions in order to release men who might replace the machinists.

4. Longshoremen. Negroes were used in a number of old strikes. Recently they were used in the United Fruit Line Docks, but apparently without success.

5. Waiters. Negroes replaced white waiters during the strike at Lorber's Restaurant. They are still employed. Mr. Lehman (Waiters' Union #1) said that there is a Colored Headwaiters' Organization on Lenox Avenue which furnishes strike-breakers to employers.

### III. Methods of Organization.

#### Mixed Locals:

Practically all of the organizations which admitted Negroes were mixed, i. e., Negro and White. The only separate Negro locals encountered were Waiters' Union #11 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employes' International Alliance, a very small organization of one shop, a carpenters' local and Longshoremen's Union #968, a Brooklyn local of the International Longshoremen's Association. It is interesting to note that the latter organization has recently merged its numerous Colored and Italian locals until they are now practically all mixed. The officers find that they can "get better results" in this manner.

#### Federal Locals of the American Federation of Labor:

Mr. Hugh Frayne, New York Representative of the American Federation of Labor, has made several attempts to organize Negroes who, for some reason, were not eligible for membership in existing International Organizations, as Federal Locals directly affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. These were not very successful, though Mr. Frayne still does

not feel that the situation is hopeless. Mr. Robertson of the Railroad and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employes, whose organization does not accept colored members, thinks that this is the only possible way to organize workers who would otherwise be in his organization. He feels, however, that the Negroes would rather be in the same international.

Of the unions which Mr. Frayne attempted to form, the Railway Station Porters and Cleaners Union #16717, American Federation of Labor (Red Caps) is the only one which remains. This is by no means in a flourishing condition. The Elevator Starters and Operators, begun in the same manner, has since become local #67 of the Elevator Constructors International Unions and is now a mixed local. When the colored membership is sufficiently large, they will probably form a separate colored local. It was suggested, however, that their new international affiliation which is more highly skilled, is "not keen" about the colored delegates.

#### Colored Organizers:

The only unions which employed a paid colored organizer were the carpenters, elevator operators and seamen. The Elevator Operators and Starters have recently employed a colored organizer who is "bringing in good reports." The Eastern and Gulf Sailors Association employed two Negro organizers last year, who "didn't bring in a single name." However, Mr. Miller said that this organization was at very low ebb at the time, white as well as colored, and that he expected to try colored organizers again.

Of those who didn't use colored organizers, the Stationary Firemen, whose organization has Negro organizers in other cities, said that there weren't enough colored firemen in New York City to justify the employment of a paid colored organizer. Miss Schneidermann, of the Women's Trade Union League, who attempted to organize laundresses, said that the colored women had an inferiority complex and wouldn't give the same respect and attention to a colored as to a white organizer.

### C. Discrimination.

#### I. In Obtaining Employment.

Since this survey was confined chiefly to union officials, very little information was obtained on this phase of the situation. The Teamsters and Longshoremen mentioned that the men "shape" together, and presumably, stand equal chance of being employed. Mr. deChabert, of the Department of Labor, thought, however, that they were less likely to get work. He mentioned that in mixed gangs, the proportion of Negroes was very small. The Elevator Operators said that when employers paid high rates, they preferred white men. The Stationary Foremen thought that employers sometimes request Negroes—"they think they can work them harder,—but they can't."

#### II. In the Unions.

A large number of unions' constitutions prescribe no "discrimination because of race, color or creed." These include a large number of the building trades, stationary firemen, teamsters, longshoremen, ladies' garment workers, etc. Nevertheless, although no discrimination is ostensibly employed, they are sometimes debarred by the high initiation fees, the apprenticeship rules and even more subtly. The compositors, for example, admit Negroes on the same terms as white men, but they're "not looking for them."

Negroes in mixed locals are rarely elected to office. A notable exception in this regard is the Secretary of the Atlantic and Gulf Clerks, Stewards and Waiters Union (International Seamen's Union) who is apparently considered a very able, loyal and efficient officer. Colored delegates to international conventions are more commonly met with. Colored locals will, of course, have colored officers and colored delegates. However, in the case of the carpenters' organization, they are "advised not to send delegates to the general meetings."

#### III. Suggestions as to Action.

It is assumed that one of the most practical ways of bettering the status of Negroes in industry is to extend their organization in Unions.

The above brief survey of the facts makes it clear that while there are obstacles due to general racial prejudice, the traditions or practices of unions, and the attitude of Negroes, such obstacles are not insuperable and have, in some cases, been overcome by practical work in detail rather than by any amount of general propaganda.

Table I furnishes a rough map of the situation which will indicate how the problem may be attacked in detail.

Where the larger number of Negroes work, and are less well organized, intensive application may be made by approaching both the union organization and the Negroes in the particular industrial group. Any influence, time, special knowledge or funds which the Urban League has to offer may be concentrated at these strategic points.

It is possible that the development and training of Negro organizers would help.

It is possible that a special central body representing Negro union locals, with a trained secretariat, would be able to extend the movement. In establishing any such body, however, care should be taken to secure the authorization and good will of the proper union authorities. Mr. Frayne of the American Federation of Labor should be consulted on this.

Similar central bodies already exist in the form of the United Hebrew Trades, the Italian Federation of Labor, and the Women's Trade Union League. Some derive their support from affiliated local unions, others, at least in part, from interested international unions, and others from individual contributions.

It will be found that in the case of some unions where Negroes are not well organized, whites are equally poorly organized as with the bookkeepers, stenographers and accountants. There may be poor places to begin work—except in cases where the organization of Negroes might furnish a key to the situation.

In some cases where no union has jurisdiction, Federal locals of Negroes may be established. Such locals are affiliated directly with the American Federation of Labor. In other cases,



such as private laundresses, dressmakers and servants, organization will be difficult if not impossible.

There is certainly an opportunity here for devoted, patient and useful service, which will establish a real center of cooperation between the labor movement and the Negroes in New York. Such work, of course, ought to be continuous, since its usefulness would grow with experience, under acquaintanceship, and confidence on the part of all concerned.

## APPENDIX IV

### EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL UNIONS WITH NEGRO MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

(Classified by Broad Occupational Groups as Used in Chapter Five)

#### CLOTHING AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

##### CLOTHING WORKERS OF AMERICA, AMALGAMATED:

Local 11—Children's Jacket Pressers<sup>1</sup>—organized in 1915 and composed of 550 members of whom there are no Negroes. Initiation fee is \$20.65, and yearly dues are \$26.00. However, according to the secretary the local never had a Negro member because "Negroes never applied for membership". Because the local feels that Negroes should be organized "as workers rather than as Negro workers", it has made no special efforts to organize or solicit Negro members and contemplates no such program for the future. Up to this time it has not participated in a strike and, therefore, has had no experience with Negro workers during strikes.

Local 158—Wholesale Clothing Clerks<sup>2</sup>—organized 1933 and composed of 1500 members of whom 25 are Negroes. Initiation fee is \$27.50, and yearly dues are \$26.00. In this local Negroes have been members since its origin, and "they have gradually worked into the more skilled groups". The secretary-treasurer pointed out that the small Negro membership is due to the fact that there are very few Negro wholesale clothing clerks. Further, he stated that Negro members are among his best workers. "But," he said, "they are naturally lazy and

<sup>1</sup> Interview with the secretary of the Local—July 24, 1935. (Name withheld.)

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Harry Lederman, Secretary-Treasurer, July 30, 1935.

unthrifty." Other remarks were that all workers should be organized into mixed locals regardless of race or color and that no special plans should be made to organize any one group of workers. "What's the use of making all those special plans for Negroes when our workers get along like brothers. Why, there's even a Negro on our Executive Board." The union has had two strikes, one in 1933 and one in 1935. In both strikes Negroes were loyal members and participated as fellow unionists. "Working side by side in strikes helps them to get along better."

Local 169—Washable Jacket, Pants and Novelty Workers<sup>3</sup>—This Local did not disclose any information. The representative interviewed merely stated, "We do not discriminate against anyone on account of race, color or creed. I have worked along side Negro workers in some of our shops and have found them good workers."

Local 243—Shirt Makers—Pressers<sup>4</sup>—Organized in 1918 and composed of 500 members of whom 25 are Negro women. Initiation fee is \$10.50 and dues \$31.20 yearly. These 25 have become members only through being employed in a shop when the local organized it. "Negroes were in the first shop we organized, and we took them in just like anybody else," the business agent said. "We had no difficulty organizing them, and they work peaceably along with our white workers," he remarked further. Although Negroes are supposed to be admitted to full membership and participation in union activities, none of them hold offices in the local. "The number is so small that they cannot elect an officer", he unwittingly said after stating that they did not think in terms of race or act in groups or cliques. He continued to state that in the strikes held, the outstanding in Brooklyn in 1935, Negro members remained loyal to the union while Negro non-union workers performed as strike breakers. "They don't seem to understand the principles of trade unionism".

<sup>3</sup> Interview with John N. Federiconi, Representative, August 8, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Mr. Petilli, Business Agent, August 6, 1935.

Local 250—United Neckwear Makers<sup>a</sup>—organized in 1903 and composed of 2800 members, 85 of whom are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$15.00 and yearly dues are \$24.00. Although Negroes have been members of this local since its origin, there have never been more than 85. In its special efforts to organize Negro workers this union has on several occasions engaged Mr. Frank Crosswaith, Negro union organizer, to meet with Negro workers, discuss the advantages of organized labor with them and propose organization to them. These efforts have given most favorable and encouraging results according to the officer interviewed. They plan more of them for the future.

This officer favors and believes that organization of workers of the same trade, etc., into one mixed local offers the best solution for the race difficulties in organized labor.

In addition to taking active part in the meetings, etc., some Negro workers hold minor positions in the subsidiary bodies and in the organizational committee. The local conducted strikes in 1918 and 1933 in which Negroes participated as fellow unionists. The result of this was a further organization of both white and Negro workers and a lessening of the tension of racial sentiment.

Local 251—United Neckwear Cutters<sup>a</sup>—organized in 1897 and composed of 300 members—no Negroes. The initiation fee is \$50.00, and yearly dues are \$36.00. This local has never had a Negro member. The officer interviewed feels that if Negroes applied for membership in this union they would be refused by some method or other—such as an efficiency test. The high initiation fee, \$50.00, is definitely set to discourage Negro workers and young white workers. This union is monopolized by old, white workers. Should a Negro come to the union with a transfer card, it is believed that he would be accepted only after a long struggle and a final mandate for his acceptance by the general organization, A. C. W. of A.

<sup>a</sup> Interview with Louis Fuchs, Manager, July 29, 1935.

<sup>a</sup> Interview with Louis Fuchs, Manager, July 29, 1935.

## GARMENT WORKERS' UNION, INTERNATIONAL LADIES:

Local 1—Cloak and Suit Operators<sup>1</sup>—organized in 1895 and composed of 8,000 members. At present, there are no Negroes in the 8000 membership of this local. Two years ago, one Negro joined in September, 1933 and dropped out in December, 1933. His leaving after but four months in the union could not be explained. "He just dropped out," said Mr. Davidoff, office manager of the local. The initiation fee of this local is not definitely established but varies with the "condition" of each applicant and is determined by a special committee on admission of new members. However, the yearly dues, \$26.00, are payable 50c weekly. Referring back to Negro membership, Mr. Davidoff said, "Negroes just don't take to this kind of work. We would have no objection to taking them if they only applied for membership. In 1933 Heady came here, applied and was admitted at once.—And let me tell you again, he was a nice fellow—gentle, courteous and respectful."

In the strikes of the I. L. G. W. U. in which this local participated and in the shop strikes or stoppages of this local no Negroes have been involved. "They could not be involved in our strikes," said Mr. Davidoff, "because they don't work in this craft of the industry."

Local 10—Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters<sup>2</sup>—It was not until after the coming of the N. R. A. that Negroes gained entrance to this local which was organized in 1884 and which has at present 8500 members. In 1933, the Negroes applied for membership and were then admitted without any difficulty. These, said Mr. Stulzer, were the first to apply for membership. They have paid in full the initiation fee of \$77.00 which is payable quarterly during the first year's membership and are paying their weekly dues of 40c regularly. Also, they are full fledged members working in this industry. It is his thought that they do not attempt to learn the trade and that these two "accidentally" learned it while working about some shop as porters

<sup>1</sup> Interview with M. Davidoff, Office Manager, August 19, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Louis Stulzer, Assistant Manager, August 19, 1935.

or something of that nature. "Nevertheless," he said, "these two fellows are fine chaps. They know their work and get along excellently with the other workers." He stated further that if any Negroes applied for membership in the future, they would undoubtedly be warmly welcomed. To illustrate the attitude of the whites towards Negroes—even though the union had no Negro members until recently—Mr. Stulzer points out that on several occasions, Frank Crosswaith, Negro General Organizer for I. L. G. W. U., has been engaged to lecture to meetings of this local. In the many shop strikes or stoppages participated in by this local, no Negroes have been involved as strike breakers or as non-union men in open shops; however, the two Negro members have cooperated in every way as fellow unionists.

Local 17—Infant, Child Coat & Reefer Makers\*—This is another old local, having been organized in 1905. Of the 2800 members there are only ten Negroes. This number represents the greatest number of Negroes ever in this local. Until recently, there were only two or three. The initiation fee, \$26.85 to \$48.85, and the dues, 35c weekly, are reasonably small. The small Negro membership is accounted for by the fact that no Negroes or few were employed in the shops organized and few have applied directly to the union for membership. No efforts have been made to recruit and organize Negro operators. These few Negro workers seldom go to meetings and are very inactive. But, the "best possible relationship" exists between them and the white workers. "Before I became secretary," stated Miss Weisberg, "I used to work side by side with a Negro girl. She was swell. She was so sympathetic and understanding. I tried to get her to go to the meetings, but she seldom did. Never to my knowledge has there been any trouble about discrimination in any of our shops." No Negroes hold offices in this local. In the general strikes from time to time—usually every two years—and in the shop stoppages the Negro workers have cooperated highly and participated as fellow unionists.

\* Interview with Miss Weisberg, Secretary, August 14, 1935.

Local 20—Waterproof Garment Workers<sup>10</sup>—organized in 1910. This local has but one Negro in its membership of 700. In 1915 Mr. Marsin was a shop manager at the Fulton Coat Company, 14-16 West 17th Street, New York City. At that time he brought this Negro worker—a neighbor and friend of his—to the shop where he learned the trade. He was then admitted to the union and has worked at the same shop since 1915.

Mr. Kessler explains that one must be an experienced worker before membership is granted. This definitely limits the number who can qualify for membership because practically all shops are closed now; hence, there is little opportunity for one to get the required experience.

Apart from the above-mentioned, neither the union nor any of its members or officials have encouraged Negroes to learn the trade and join the union. "Since", said Mr. Kessler, "we never had Negroes come to us for membership, we had forgotten all about them." In the strike and shop stoppages Negroes have not been involved. Their lack of experience in the work prevents them from joining or opposing the union.

Local 23—Shirt Makers<sup>11</sup>—An interview with the manager-secretary of this local failed to produce any factual information on the activity of its Negro members, if there be any. The attitude of this official indicated that it is very likely that this local has no Negro members.

Local 25—Blouse and Waist Makers<sup>12</sup>—In 1933, when this local was organized, all the workers in the shops were taken in as charter members. Among these were several hundred Negroes. Both the total membership and the Negro membership increased during the one and one-half years of this local's existence to 2800 and 400, respectively.

Mr. Moskowitz emphasized the policy of the local to make no difference because of color or race among the workers.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with David Marsin, Manager, and Joe Kessler, Secretary-Treasurer, August 15, 1935.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Louis Reiss, Manager-Secretary, August 15, 1935.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Max Moskowitz, Manager, August 15, 1935.

"They are treated as workers and not workers of a certain color," he said. Because of this policy no special methods are used to organize Negro workers as such. There is no Negro organizer.

Negroes—girls for the most part—are very active in the meeting and social activities of the union. There are three on the Executive Board and about six shop chairladies. On one Negro worker in this local was bestowed the highest honor which the local can give. She was a delegate of the local to the annual International Convention of the I. L. G. W. U. in 1934. Local 25 also sent a mixed delegation to the Negro Labor Conference in July, 1935, in New York City. Mr. Moskowitz concluded, "Let me sum up our relationship with the Negro workers in this union. Speaking as the manager of this union, I say that Negro workers in factories under control of Local 25 respond to the call of the union whenever called upon by this organization together with the white workers in a disciplined manner. In our experience we never had trouble during strikes, but Negro workers would remain loyal to the union while the others would go out."

Local 32—Corset & Brassiere Makers<sup>13</sup>—When officials of this local could not be reached for an interview, they were contacted by mail. The answer to this communication was:

"In reply to your communication of September 11th, I beg to advise you that the colored membership in our union is exceptionally small, and we are in no position to fill out the enclosed blank or supply any other information which would be of help to you."

Local 38—Ladies Tailors, Custom Dressmakers,<sup>14</sup> etc.—organized in 1909. "Negro membership in this local has always been very small because Negroes are not in this kind of work. They create no problem with us. Also, the employers won't hire them.

<sup>13</sup> Correspondence with Abraham Snyder, Manager, September 11 and 17, 1935.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with J. Jacobs, Secretary, August 26, 1935.



Most of our members come from shops we organize and since there are usually very few Negroes in the shops, there are likewise very few in the Union," Mr. Jacobs pointed out just before he disclosed the membership figures for his local. Of the 1200 members there are 12 Negroes. The initiation fee is \$5.00 and the dues \$20.80 yearly or 40c weekly. Since 1912, there have been two or three Negro members of the local, and the present number of Negro membership is the highest ever in at one time. The local makes no special effort to get Negro members nor to keep those who are in the local. It feels, said Mr. Jacobs, that there are so few Negroes in this type of work that it does not need to consider the Negro worker as a vital factor in the labor movement. However, these Negroes who are members are full-fledged in every respect—receiving the same wages and working the same number of hours as the white members. There was a Negro girl shop chairlady in 1934. Mr. Jacobs does not hold a bright prospect for the Negro worker in the organized crafts of this kind of work.

Local 40—Belt Makers<sup>18</sup>—This union is of recent origin, July 1, 1933, and has grown very rapidly. There are only 60 Negroes in the total membership of 1325, and these are mainly unskilled and semi-skilled workers—floor workers and helpers; however, the number is increasing and is expected to increase greatly. Not all of the Negroes who are members come into the union through the organization of shops. Some came to the union office and applied for membership. These were granted membership after proving their efficiency. "My best members," asserted Mr. Schwartz, "are all the Negroes. They are more faithful and loyal to the union. Although they are not picketing in our present men's belt section strike now on, they have proved to be the best pickets." They like to picket because "they know that the union will have to reciprocate by giving them first preference for the best jobs." The Negro workers are moderately active, participating in an ordinary degree in the meetings. They have not as yet held any offices.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Sam Schwartz, Secretary-Treasurer, August 14, 1935.

Local 60—Dress & Waist Pressers<sup>16</sup>—composed of dress and waist pressers who separated from Local 35 in August, 1933. It was at that time that Negroes came into Local 60 in great numbers, especially just after the great general strike of the garment workers in 1933. Then, the initiation fee was low, \$10.00, and within the reach of the workers. Now it has been put up to \$75.00 "to keep the union from growing out of proportion to the work available and to protect those members now in the union."

The union has a total membership of 4500 of whom 700 are Negroes. Practically all of these 700 are girls and women. From this Negro membership there is but one Negro officer, a member of the Executive Board. At the same time he holds the office of sergeant-at-arms, "a high office in this union."

Mr. Wasilevsky told of an "arrangement for the convenience of the Harlem Negro members." Very often the "Harlem district" meets up at the Renaissance Casino at 138th Street and 7th Avenue. The purpose of these meetings is to select the Negro Executive Board member—"We allow them one member for the Executive Board"—and to register any complaints or grievances arising among the workers or between the workers and employers. So far, he said, he has received no complaints of discrimination of workers or ill harmony among them.

Local 62—White Goods Workers<sup>17</sup>—organized in 1909. Because no record is kept as to the nationality or color of the members, it was estimated that there were 1,000 Negroes out of 12,000 total members. "They have really taken full advantage of their opportunity."

Miss Shapiro said that, if the labor movement is to be successful, all workers regardless of race, etc., should be organized. "Since they are doing the same work under the same conditions, they should be organized together," she remarked. While no very special program is offered for Negro workers, they are

<sup>16</sup> Interview with J. Wasilevsky, Chairman, September 13, 1935.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Fanny Shapiro, Organizer, July 30, 1935.

continuously encouraged to join the union and to take active part in its activities.

At first, according to Miss Shapiro, Negro girls are slow about attending the meetings, business and social, and taking advantage of the other opportunities, but as they realize that they are "really welcome and wanted in the union," they begin to develop into "A-1" members. Now, there are five shop chairladies—and all of these are in shops where the whites outnumber the Negroes. Also, Negro girls are taking advantage of the classes offered by the union school for its workers.

She pointed out, further, that the Negro girls are going more and more into the more skilled and better paid craft in the union, viz., the number of operators is increasing, number of examiners increasing and number of pressers decreasing.

There are always single shop strikes. In these Negro girls who are members of the union stick to the union. Some Negro girls without union affiliations often work as strike breakers. Attempts, with little success, are made to organize them. However, there are also many white girl strike breakers who cannot be organized.

Local 64—Button Hole Makers<sup>18</sup>—organized in 1919. This is a very small local, having a membership of only 50. There are no Negroes "merely because Negroes do not work in this craft."

Local 66—Bonnaz, Singer & Hand Embroiderers, Tuckers, Stitchers and Pleaters<sup>19</sup>—organized in 1913. According to Nathan Riesel, before the coming of the N. R. A. there were a very few Negroes in this local—about three or four. Then, Negro workers, like all others, realized the advantages of unionization in getting better working conditions and pay; consequently, they made application in greater numbers for membership. On several occasions, Mr. Frank Crosswaith (Negro), general organizer for the I. L. G. W. U., was used to address groups of Negro and white workers. Such efforts increased the

<sup>18</sup> Interview with I. Schiffman, Manager, August 15, 1935.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Nathan Riesel, Business Representative, August 13, 1935.

Negro membership to approximately 100, which is yet a very small percentage of the total membership, approximately 3200. All of these Negro workers are full fledged members, working mainly as floor workers, finishers, stitchers, and pleaters. There are few Negroes in the highest paying crafts, tuckers and embroiderers.

One Negro girl is a shop chairlady. The other workers are not so active and do not attend the meetings regularly. Mr. Riesel gave several accounts of his experience with Negro workers. "In one shop," he says, "There was a hell of a fight. The employers did not want the Negro and white workers sitting side by side and threatened to fire the Negro workers. The local called a shop strike in which all of the workers joined and the employers were forced to stop their discriminatory practices." He pointed out further that he believes that a great deal of the ill-feeling and racial discrimination is caused by the difference in efficiency of the workers. On that point he said, "You must admit and face the fact that the average Negro worker is not as efficient as the average white worker. Of course, that is explained by the fact that Negro workers in this trade have had far less experience than the white workers. I sincerely believe that with the development of equal efficiency of workers, racial sentiment will subside." Continuing, he said, "The Negro worker must become industrially inclined. He must drop altogether that attitude that she is made to do the rough work and that 'if she (a white woman) gets \$25 a week, \$18 will be enough for me.'" All efforts are directed to develop these desired attitudes on the part of the Negro worker.

Local 82 — Examiners and Bushlers<sup>20</sup> — organized in 1917. There never was a Negro member in this local which has at present 400 members. The manager-secretary stated that no Negro ever applied for membership, that the local had organized no shop in which Negroes worked and that it made no effort to organize any other Negro workers "because there was no necessity to do so."

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Mr. Rosenblatt, Manager-Secretary, August 15, 1935.

Local 89—Italian Dress and Waist Makers<sup>21</sup>—organized in 1919. Of the 43,000 members of this local, the largest in the I. L. G. W. U., there are no Negroes. Its manager explained, "In this trade there are many, many Italians, many of whom speak no English. To take care of this situation we have found it advisable to organize a special local for Italian workers." Membership in this local is definitely denied to all other racial groups.

Local 102—Cloak & Dress Drivers & Helpers<sup>22</sup>—organized in 1933. Of the 1500 members of this union there are 500 Negroes—a high percentage; however, Negroes are not too active in the organization. Although they pay their dues regularly when they are working, they do not attend the meetings as they should. There is but one Negro, member of the Executive Board, who holds any position in the union. The secretary stated, "The policies of this local regarding Negro membership are the same as those of our parent organization, the I. L. G. W. U. You will recall that in 1934 it held its convention in Chicago. I was a delegate to this convention. Well, it so happened that the hotel in which it met at first refused to allow the Negro delegates to ride in the front passenger elevators but insisted that they use the rear freight elevators. Without losing any time, the convention voted to move—at a great expense—to another hotel where no such ridiculous thing was even thought of. I am happy to have cast an affirmative vote for that move." He concluded, "We are not Communist by any means, but we are socialistic in our views because we feel the brotherhood of men. Negro youth can do a lot for the labor union once they are organized and taught the principle of trade unionism. That is our present program."

There have been several strikes against discriminatory practices and firing of Negro men for no reason. Each resulted in the reinstatement of the workers with pay for the time lost and

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Luigi Antonini, Manager, August 20, 1935.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Nat Wallace, Secretary, August 13, 1935.

in the creation of a better attitude on the part of both workers and employers.

Local 132—Button & Novelty Workers<sup>22</sup>—organized in 1933. Mr. Feldman estimated that there are 50 Negroes in this membership of 450. These workers are experienced button makers and enjoy full memberships in the local. They are becoming more popular in the local because "they become the best members once they are convinced that the labor union can help them." "The Negro workers," said Mr. Feldman, "are more active than the white workers. They never refuse their duty and do what they are supposed to do in the shops and in the meetings." The relationship between the white workers and Negro workers is most friendly and brotherly. Although the Negro workers are in minority in all the shops, there are two Negro shop chairladies and one Negro shop chairman. Almost weekly there are individual shop strikes for this local. In these the Negro workers picket just as the other workers. None of these strikes have been called because of discriminatory practices in the shops. They have all been for purposes of organization of the shop or for demands to improve working conditions and better pay.

Local 142—Ladies' Neckwear Workers<sup>24</sup>—Remarks of Mr. Tuvim indicate that Negroes are quite active in his local. Of the 2750 members, 375 (approximately) are Negroes. About 75% of the Negroes work as pressers. The other crafts—into which they are gradually shifting—are cutters, operators, hand-sewers, trimmers, gauge runners and fringers. "They are very slow about changing," he says, "because they feel more secure as pressers and are afraid to take the chance involved in a change." Most of the Negro workers enter the union as pressers.

Much is being done for all the workers in the union. Among these activities are classes and discussion groups held both at

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Martin Feldman, Manager, August 15, 1935.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Joseph Tuvim, Manager, August 14, 1935.

the meeting place of local 142 and at the Rand School of Social Science and the Brookwood Labor College. Negroes are members of all of these groups and classes. In fact, the leader of one of these group discussions on trade-unionism is Mr. Frank Crosswaith, the Negro general organizer for the I. L. G. W. U. In addition to being members of the classes, etc., Negroes participate on other business and organizational committees. There are three Negro Girls on the Executive Board. Several Negro girls serve as chairladies for many of the shops.

There are at all times a few or at least one shop strike—either for purposes of organizing the shop or to improve working conditions and pay. In these the Negro workers demonstrate their loyalty to the union by their untiring service as pickets. "Yes," concluded Mr. Tuvim, "they are hard and stubborn at the beginning, but make the best type of union members once they know what it is all about."

Local 177<sup>28</sup>—Ladies Garment Alteration Workers—organized in 1934. Membership in this union is made of women's clothing alteration workers who are employed in the stores of the downtown section of Manhattan. It was reported that in these no Negroes were employed, hence, the absence of Negroes among the 100 members. The secretary feels, however, that Negroes would have no difficulty in obtaining membership if they applied.

GARMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA, UNITED: A general organizer of this union was interviewed.<sup>29</sup> Only after persuasion did he make a statement of three of the New York locals. Local 3—Tailors—coat makers, Local 8—Tailors—pants makers and Local 178—Tailors—overall makers. His remarks were: "I will cooperate with you as far as I see fit; that is, as far as what you ask relates to the Negro worker. We have no Negroes in these three locals; therefore, any other information about the local will not be of any benefit to you, as far as I see." Pressing him to state why there were no Negro members or what experi-

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Miss Gallack, Secretary, September 24, 1935.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with E. Kaufmann, General Organizer, September 17, 1935.

ence the locals had with Negro workers, the interviewer could get no more than the reply, "Oh, we do not bar them from the union; they do not apply; our dues are very nominal and the initiation fee is nothing prohibitive."

"I am a union man for forty-five years. Since I've been general organizer for the U. G. W. A., I've been all through the South. That's where there are many colored people working in this industry, and they are union members, too." Also, he stated that he did not know of any Negro member of the New York locals of the United Garment Workers. Apparently the 100 members reported by Reid<sup>87</sup> in 1930 had all discontinued membership, and no new ones had joined. It is probable, too, that the majority of the Negro workers turned to the more friendly Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

**HATTERS, CAP & MILLINER WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION,  
UNITED:**

Local 7—United Hat Trimmers.<sup>88</sup> The secretary said, "As far as I know there are no colored people working in the men's hat trimming branches of this industry. I'm sure that you will find many of them in the millinery workers' branch, though." She then pointed out that since there are no Negro workers in that branch of the work, Local 7 had no Negro members.

The total membership of the local, which was organized in 1909, is 900. Its initiation fee is \$5.00 and dues 2% of wages.

Local 8<sup>89</sup>—Men's Felt Hat Workers—organized in 1854—736 members—no Negroes. Its initiation fee is \$25.00 and dues 3% of earning. When pressed to give his opinion on why there were no Negroes in the union, the secretary-treasurer would say no more than, "This work is too arduous for Negroes, I guess."

Local 24—Millinery Workers<sup>90</sup>—organized in 1910. Mr. Nathaniel Spector, Manager, made a few remarks. "Negroes

<sup>87</sup> Ira DeA. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Minnie Teitelbaum, Secretary, September 30, 1935.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Louis Africk, Secretary-Treasurer, September 13, 1935.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Nathaniel Spector, Manager, September 14, 1935.



first entered this union about fifteen years ago (1920)," he said. "Just what started them I don't know, but I suppose that's when they first got interested." The work under the jurisdiction of this local covers several crafts, among which are cutters, milliners and trimmers. All of the 200 Negro members of the local are trimmers—the least skilled workers.

The total membership of the local is 12,000. Initiation fee varies from \$10.00 to \$50.00, depending on the craft, and the dues are \$26.00 yearly for men and \$20.00 yearly for women, payable 50c and 40c per week respectively.

The local has no special programs in regard to Negro workers. Those who are members either applied directly to the office for membership or joined when the union organized the shop in which they were working at the time. According to Mr. Spector they are very poor members—few of them ever attending the meetings. There are no Negro officers of the union "because there are so few Negro members", Mr. Spector said. He also asserted that the union "does not bar or make it uncomfortable for any of its members and that the white and Negro members of Local 24 get along well, but, nevertheless, Negro members do not take an active interest.

The local has had two general strikes, 1919 and 1930. In the strike of 1919, no Negroes were involved; in the 1930 strike they participated as fellow unionists. At all times there are individual shop strikes. Very few Negroes have been involved in these.

Local 42—Millinery Blockers<sup>81</sup>—organized in 1916. Of the 300 members, 100 are Negroes—the largest number ever to hold membership at the same time. "As we find them in the shops, we take them in," continued Mr. Goldman. "These are all expert millinery blockers, are full members and are all employed at present." The initiation fee is \$75.00 when one applies for membership or \$35.00 when one comes in a group or shop organization. Both fees are payable in installments. Dues are 50c weekly. Negro workers on the whole are not

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Max Goldman, Secretary-Manager, August 21, 1935.

very active in this local: the "more intelligent" ones are more active. Some serve as voluntary organizers on the organizational committees. Not any of them, however, hold official positions in the local.

There are at all times various shop strikes in which Negroes are involved. Some are called to organize the shop, some to demand better pay and working conditions, and some to protest discriminatory practices on the part of the employers. Mr. Goldman pointed out a specific case of the last. At the Abbott Millinery Shop, which was located on 30th Street, but which is now out of business, two Negroes who were employed there were discriminated against in hours and wages, obviously because they were Negroes. The union protested by a shop strike. "The funny thing about it," said Mr. Goldman, "was that eight or ten other Negroes tried to break the strike." This incident, of course, lessened the confidence of the other union men in the Negro as a good union member.

Mr. Goldman also told of an experience of local 24. At the time it was attempting to organize the workers at Kartigamo Company, Broadway near 8th Street, over 100 Negroes were employed there. "The men were willing to take a chance and participate in the strike, but the women were very reluctant. We had to get Mr. Frank Crosswaith, Negro general organizer of the I. L. G. W. U., to talk to them and on several occasions sent a committee of Negroes from Crosswaith's office to encourage them. But, as I said before, we have no trouble with the more intelligent Negroes."

**TAILOR'S UNION OF AMERICA, JOURNEYMEN:**<sup>22</sup> This union has but one New York local, Local 1—Journeyman Tailors; therefore, the situation in this local is the sole representation of the union's relationship to Negro members and Negro workers in this city. A representative furnished the necessary information. This is another very old local, having been organized since 1883. In it Negro membership has always been negligible. Even at the present, there are only 3 Negro workers in the total member-

<sup>22</sup> Interview with A. Hoffman, Representative, August 26, 1935.

ship of 1500. "And we have a hell of a time keeping those three," said Mr. Hoffman, "in spite of our left wing policy of protecting especially our Negro workers. In the ranks of our workers, there exists much chauvinism and we have a hell of a time combating it." Here and there when a shop is organized, a Negro worker may be employed. If so, he or she is taken into membership. No Negroes have ever come into this local, as far as Mr. Hoffman remembers, through direct application. They have all been contacted personally by the organizers. Although there are only three Negro members, one is on the shop committee at Bergman & Levy, 301 West 36th Street. "In this shop," continued Mr. Hoffman, "we had quite some trouble with two Italian women who were always bickering with the Negro girl. Italian women are most backward and their views are limited. We had to threaten to discharge them from the union before they become peaceable and worked with the Negro girl." In this same shop a strike was declared to get a dollar raise in the wages of the Negro worker, to bring her wages up to the union scale. The union won the strike. Mr. Hoffman remarked further that if more Negroes applied for membership directly to the union, their membership would be gladly accepted. "That is the only way," he said, "because the employers will not hire them as tailors but are willing to take them as porters or errand boys, etc. At present we are making plans to organize all the pressers in our industry. There are many Negroes among them. Also, in order to keep up with the Negro situation in labor, we send delegates to all of the special Negro Labor conferences, mass meeting, etc. We think that a lot can be done in the future through the organization of the Negro workers."

TEXTILE WORKERS OF AMERICA, UNITED:<sup>28</sup> Local 2440—Textile Trimmers—of this union was contacted. During the interview the chairman of the local read from the constitution the following statement from Article XII—Local Unions—Section 1:

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Jack Zuiberg, Chairman, August 6, 1935.

"Textile workers in any department or federation of the textile industry may become members of the United Textile Workers of America by the payment to the departmental organization of the required initiation fee, which includes first month's tax."

Then he said, "Everything is done by our Executive Board. I will present the matter to them, if you'll just say what you want, and we will then mail you a statement. But, I'll say this much. We don't make any difference with our workers whether they are black, white, red or even green. You'll hear from us." But, no such statement was issued. It is generally known, however, that the United Textile Workers of America and its locals are of an extremely "conservative policy". It does not believe in mixed locals; therefore, it is probable that it has no Negro members in New York. Ten years ago it had no Negro members in the United States according to a statement by its president, Thomas M. McMahon, on January 27, 1926.<sup>84</sup>

#### TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

**CONDUCTORS, ORDER OF RAILWAY**<sup>85</sup>—organized in 1868. This is one of the unions which excludes Negroes by a constitutional provision. When no information was obtained from the New York office, a communication was sent to the National office in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. An answer was returned with the excerpt from the statutes of the Order in regard to membership qualifications: "Sec. 19, Statutes, Any white men shall be eligible under the following conditions, . . . etc."

**ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION, MARINE**<sup>86</sup>—Local 33. Pointing out that, by constitution, membership of this union was limited to Federal licensed marine engineers or commissioned engineering officers of the United States Navy, Mr. Korb said, "I don't believe there are any Negro licensed

<sup>84</sup> Ira DeA. Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>85</sup> Correspondence with National Office, Order of Railway Conductors, November 6, 1935.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Mr. Korb, Assistant Secretary, October 1, 1935.

engineers or commissioned engineers of the United States Navy. Although we have no bar against Negroes as the Masters, Mates and Pilots of America has, I believe that there are no Negro members of this union—if there should be any Negroes who can qualify—because the work under our jurisdiction is coast-wide and takes the members into the Southern ports—and you know the attitude toward skilled Negro workers in them. It has never had a Negro member.”

Local 33 of this independent union not affiliated with the A. F. of L. was organized in 1895. At present it has a total membership of 840, none of whom are Negroes. Its initiation fee is \$25.00, payable in installments, and its dues are \$18.00 yearly, payable quarterly.

In 1929 Local 33 participated in a general marine strike. In relation to its activities no Negroes were involved.

**FIREMAN AND ENGINEERS, BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE**—another union excluding Negroes by constitutional provision.<sup>87</sup> Communication with Albert Phillips, General Secretary-Treasurer, brought forth the following statement:

“ I am afraid that the questionnaire which you enclosed could not consistently be completed by this organization. You will understand that our membership consists only of engineers, firemen, hostlers, and hostlers’ helpers, working on the railroads, and colored men are not eligible for membership in our Brotherhood. . . . ”<sup>88</sup>

**LICENSED OFFICERS OF UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, UNITED**<sup>89</sup>—The New York Division was set up when the Union was organized in June, 1933. At present it has 1300 members, none of whom are Negroes. Its initiation fee is \$10.00 and dues \$18.00 yearly. A four-year apprenticeship is required for membership. A representative of the union remarked, “ Unfortunately, it so happens that there are no Negroes in this

<sup>87</sup> Spero, S. D. & Harris, A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>88</sup> Correspondence with Albert Phillips, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, November 11, 1935.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Mr. Miller, Representative, September 26, 1935.

profession. I know of no Negro captain, mate, pilot or engineer who could qualify for membership. We bar no one, but anyone holding the certificate from the United States Steamboat Inspection Service is eligible."

LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL:

Local 895—General Longshore Workers<sup>40</sup>—Mr. Hussey, Secretary, said, "I've been working with colored fellows in this union for twenty years, and I'm here to say now they are fine fellows." Organized in July, 1915, Local 895 has at present 200 members, 20 of whom are Negroes. Its initiation fee is \$12.00 and dues \$12.00, payable \$1.00 monthly. Negroes have been members of the local since its organization in 1915. None, however, have been officers of the local.

In strikes the Negro members of the union participated as "100%" fellow unionists. Unorganized Negroes worked as scabs. Mr. Hussey mentioned the experience of some of the other locals of the I. L. A., saying that the steamship companies employed "professional strike breakers" from Harlem and from the South. He said that although such activity does breed race hatred, it did not affect his local.

Local 933—Tugboat Workers<sup>41</sup>—It was organized in 1933; it has at present 560 members, 10 of whom are Negroes; the initiation fee is \$8.00 and the dues \$12.00 yearly or \$1.00 monthly. Negroes have been members of the local since it was organized in 1933. Although they pay the same initiation fee and dues, they do not get the same wages because they are not skilled workers—deck hands, seamen, pilots, etc. They are firemen, cooks and general helpers. They were merely included when the tug-boat workers organized in 1933. However, Negroes are considered as full members of the local. There are no Negro officers in the local. The local has had no strikes since its origin.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Mr. Hussey, Secretary, October 1, 1935.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Mr. Sampson, Delegate, September 12, 1935.

Local 1124 — General Cargo Workers <sup>43</sup> — This local union is one of the "most reasonable" in the International Longshoremen's Association. As compared to the checkers' local's initiation fee of \$500.00, this local required only one fiftieth or \$10.00. Yearly dues are \$12.00 payable \$1.00 monthly. Of the 600 members there are 12 Negroes, some of whom have been members since the organization of the local. The Negro membership has always been small and approximately the same throughout the years since 1919. As there are several Negro locals, this one makes no special effort to organize Negro workers; however, when they are encountered by organizers on the piers, they are invited to join. Usually, they go into the union gladly and without any protests. Mr. Porto said, "When they are union men, they are good; but, when they are not, they are terrible." In the many individual strikes and stoppages "the Negro union men were sympathetic and left their jobs just as other workers." "But," said Mr. Porto, "we catch hell from the unorganized Negroes—the strike breakers. There are companies which bring them in from other sections of the country just for that purpose. When the strike is over and their hell done, they leave the city for some other section on strike. When we rid ourselves of these, a lot can be gotten through strikes." "Why not organize them?", the interviewer asked. "They just can't be organized," he replied. "That bunch is not interested in the union."

Local 1171—Coopers & Cargo Repairmen.<sup>44</sup> Mr. B. McMahan, President, has been a member of the local since its organization in 1880. In 1928, the Coopers and Cargo Repairmen's local affiliated with the I. L. A. Mr. McMahan remarked: "At one time, this was a real occupation. There was great need for our men when goods were shipped in barrels. Now, with improved shipping methods, there is only need for anyone who can nail a few boards together in repairing crates and the like. We realized long ago that we all got to live and let live, so we

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Tony Porto, Secretary, August 13, 1935.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with B. McMahan, President, September 26, 1935.

took in a Negro worker in 1920. And, this fellow, Louis, who lives up there in Harlem somewhere, is a real mechanic—a cooper from the old school. He can really make 'em and break 'em."

The total membership is 350—1 Negro. The one and only Negro member holds no office in the union. To be classified as a cooper, one must have at sometime served an apprenticeship of 5 years. The general cargo repairmen need no apprenticeship. The initiation fee, payable in installments, is Twenty-five (25) dollars and the dues \$16 yearly payable \$4 quarterly.

Local 1258—Coastwise Longshoremen<sup>44</sup>—Local 1258 is a recent organization—July 14th, 1934—of Coastwise longshoremen. It has at present 1900 members, 500 of whom are Negroes. Its initiation fee is \$25.00, payable in one installment before membership is granted; dues are \$12.00 yearly or \$1.00 monthly. Negroes, having joined the local through its organization of workers on the piers have been members since its inception; nevertheless, there are no Negro officers.

**RAILROAD TRAINMEN, BROTHERHOOD OF:** The position of this one of the "Big Four" railroad unions in regard to Negro membership is clearly shown by the reply to a letter sent to the Grand Lodge in Cleveland, Ohio, when the New York representative insisted that all information regarding the union is issued through that office.

"This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of November 6th, attaching a form captioned "LABOR UNION SURVEY—NEW YORK CITY", which has to do with data in connection with employment of negroes.

You will please be informed that this organization does not admit men of that race. Therefore, it would be useless to attempt to give you any information in connection with their performance of labor.

Yours truly,"<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Peter J. Hussey, Representative, October 1, 1935.

<sup>45</sup> Correspondence with G. W. Anderson, General Secretary and Treasurer, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, November 11, 1935.



## SEAMEN'S UNION OF AMERICA, INTERNATIONAL:

Boatmen's Local Union <sup>46</sup>—This local was organized in 1933 and affiliated with the I. S. U. of A. in 1934. At present it has a total membership of 1400 of whom 30 are Negroes. For membership it requires no apprenticeship: any boatman who accepts the constitution of the I. S. U. of A. is eligible for membership. The initiation fee is \$2.00 and the dues \$12.00 yearly or \$1.00 monthly.

Mr. Wall, secretary, commented, "With us, there is never a question about color or creed or anything; as we would go on the boats or meet the workers on the boats, we invited and accepted all into the union from its very beginning; we have made no special efforts to help any one group or to bar any one group." However, Negroes do not hold any offices in the union.

This union has had one strike in June 1934—on the O'Brien and Goodwyn-Gallagher Lines. In it Negro members proved great loyalty and participated only as fellow unionists.

Firemen's Union, Marine <sup>47</sup>—Negroes were members of this union since its origin in 1892. Their number has been gradually decreasing. At present there are 3,000 of the 12,000 total membership. For membership an apprenticeship of one half year must be served. The initiation fee is \$5.00 and the dues \$12.00 yearly or \$1.00 monthly. By the constitution of the union, membership is limited to male *unlicensed* firemen, oilers, or water tenders. Practically all of the Negro members, as others, have joined the union through its organizational activity among the ship crews. While Negroes have been enjoying full membership, that is enjoying the increased wages and shorter working hours, they have never held offices in the union.

The Marine Firemen's union has conducted two general strikes—in 1914 and 1921—both for organizational purposes and for getting better working conditions. Also, there have been many individual ship or company strikes. There never were Negro strike breakers.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with M. Wall, Secretary, September 26, 1935.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Mr. Thompson, Keeper of Records, September 26, 1935.

Mr. Thompson, record keeper, asserted, "Negroes don't take to the sea any more. They like night life more now. We used to have many thousands of Negro workers—most West Indians—but now we only have about 3,000. Most of the coal-burners use Negro crews and the oil-burners white crews, but sometimes you find the opposite. The greatest competitors of the Negroes now are the Filipinos; they cut in on both Negro and white workers."

SHIPPING CLERKS, LADIES' APPAREL, LOCAL 19953 A. F. OF L.<sup>68</sup>—Negroes in this union—400 Negroes out of the total membership of 1000—were extraordinarily well represented. The president, secretary-treasurer and chairman of both the Finance Committee and Organizational Committee are Negroes; there are five Negroes on the Executive Board of seventeen members—three of whom were elected from the membership and the other two, officers of the union, are ex-officio members. "The finest possible spirit exists among us. As officers of the union, we get the best of cooperation and respect from other officers and members. There has never been displayed any feeling or racial antagonism." This local is the result of an amalgamation of two independent groups of workers—one a Negro group from Harlem and the other a white group from lower Manhattan. The work of these men was mainly the transportation of goods through the garment district of Manhattan and the shipping of the manufactured products to distributors over all of the country. Since most of the transportation work is done by the use of push carts rather than trucks, the workers have been generally called "push boys." Continuous effort to get a charter from the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union failed; consequently, the groups applied for and obtained a charter from the A. F. of L. Under this charter they have worked together in the manner explained by Mr. Harrigan. "We are making great progress and expect to continue in the future." Of very great significance among the activities of the union was the strike of August 26-September 11th, 1935 called

<sup>68</sup> Interview with L. E. Harrigan, Secretary-Treasurer, August 13, 1935.

by the above union.<sup>49</sup> The union was demanding from the employers' associations of the garment industry covered by this local a minimum wage of \$23.00 weekly and a maximum working week of 35 hours. After three weeks of strike activity the union and the associations came to an agreement establishing a minimum wage of \$15.00 weekly and a working week of a maximum of 44 hours. Although these terms were below the demands of the union, Mr. Harrigan stated that the strike was a "great success because it at least proved the power of the union to call and manage a strike." Also it gave the union recognition to deal through collective bargaining with the employers' associations. Another accomplishment was the increase in membership. By the end of the strike the total membership had increased from 1,000 to 4,000 and the Negro membership from 400 to 1900.

Mr. Harrigan asserted that the employers' associations used the fact that Local 19953 had several Negro officers, President, Secretary-Treasurer and several Executive Board members, to try to prevent recognition of the union. "Of course, they didn't say that openly," he remarked. Making a few other remarks, Mr. Harrigan stated, "We got good cooperation from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. The daily papers told of that. But, local 102 of the I. L. G. W. U.—the truckmen and drivers—actually scabbed on us although they promised to help us out." Continuing, he said, "The colored and white members of the union worked together wholeheartedly. The colored members worked harder because they know that this is their industry and they had to fight for it. The white members of this local are only using it as a means to getting to higher positions in the garment industry."

**TAXI CHAUFFERS' UNION 19795**<sup>50</sup>—Prior to October, 1934, the Taxi Chauffers of New York City were organized into a union under the name of Taxi-Drivers Union of Greater New York.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with L. E. Harrigan, Secretary-Treasurer, October 25, 1935.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Jack Butler, Special Harlem Organizer, August 30, 1935.

Because of Communistic activities in this organization, it fell in the bad grace of the A. F. of L. Subsequently, it dissolved. In October, 1934 the A. F. of L. granted a charter to the above named union. The constitution states that: "The membership of this union shall be composed of and restricted to competent licensed taxi chauffeurs over the age of twenty-one years, regardless of race, color, creed, or sex." Stated Mr. Butler, "No real effective union can exist until all discrimination is completely abolished. In our case, we know that plain common sense compels the two groups to organize. I am not trying to make anyone believe that we joined because it is of our love or benevolent feeling which prompted us. It is a sound economic and business reason." Continuing, he stated that he finds Negro workers hard to organize. "They are very suspicious and don't realize that they've got to fight for their rights. The greatest obstacle they put before me is their indifferent attitude. Very often I am pushed away with their usual remark: 'Aw, what the hell! I'm doing pretty good now. You fellows don't mean what you say, anyway.'"

Mr. Butler further stated that because there was no way of telling the race or nationality of the members from their record card in the office, he could merely estimate that there were about fifty (50) Negro members. The total membership of the Union was not disclosed. The initiation fee is \$2.00 and the dues \$12.00 yearly or 25 cents weekly. Although Negroes have been members since the inception of the local, they have not yet begun to take an active part in it. Said Mr. Butler, "They are very inactive; they do not attend the meetings and it seems that they pay their dues just because they couldn't work if they didn't."

Since the Charter was granted, this local has had one strike—The Marshall Garage Strike, February to April 1935, which was called to get union recognition. "It's too bad," remarked Mr. Butler, "that 99% of the scabs on this strike were Negroes. They couldn't realize that they were cutting their own throats because it is only in the non-union garages that they are discriminated against." "But" he reflected, "they thought they

had good reason to scab because they felt that they were being discriminated against." In spite of this activity the union won the strike and has overlooked the incident by continuing to keep the Negro members and to encourage them into great union activities. Now they are much more active as union members and are enjoying the full advantages of union protection. The greatest number of the Negroes are employed through the Marshall garage, 60th St. and 11th Avenue. The Terminal Company definitely does not hire Negroes as taxi chauffeurs and the Parmelee Company has set up a special garage at 140th Street and Fifth Avenue for its Negro employees. Both of these companies are yet unorganized. "That Parmelee Company definitely discriminates against the Negro hack-drivers is a fact. Besides putting them all at that 140th Street garage, it has painted the cabs the colored chauffeurs drive a different color. It is the present program of the union in regard to Negro members to organize the Parmelee garage at 140th Street and to wipe out any tracts of discrimination and rough treatment."

**TEAMSTERS AND CHAUFFEURS, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF:**

Local 138—Furniture and Bakery Supply Drivers<sup>81</sup>—organized in 1910 and composed of 1200 members of whom 300 are Negroes. The union officials boast of the fact that 25% of its membership is Negro. The joining fee is \$50.00, but since it is payable in installments arranged "by the discretion of the officials," poor workers are able to join; hence, the large Negro membership (they say).

New members are admitted upon the recommendation of old members in good standing. "Some white workers even recommend their Negro friends and vice versa," asserted the business agent.

Every working day there is at least one minor strike in some small shop. In these strikes, Negroes participate as fellow unionists. As a result the workers get along together, and

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Samuel Schoor, Business Agent, William Goldis, President, and William Maynard, Negro shop chairman, July 30, 1935.

some unorganized workers in open-shops get recommendations for union membership.

Mr. Maynard stated that in the years of his experience, he found no discriminatory practices in the union. He said that the Negro members take active parts in all meetings and other affairs concerning the members. The shop in which he is shop chairman has over 66% white members.

Local 167—Poultry Drivers<sup>63</sup>—organized in 1913 and composed of 500 members of whom 10 are Negroes. Officials of this local merely declared that the Negro members were "ten of the finest in character in the union." Some Negroes have been members since the origin of the local and have "shared sympathetically" all the difficulties which the union faces.

Local 185—Cleaning and Dye House Drivers<sup>64</sup>—"We have just taken a Negro member in April, 1935," he said. "He had been helping one of our drivers for a long time. When this driver gave up his route, this colored fellow took it over and then joined the union. He is still serving his period of probation and I feel that he will make an extra good man."

Organized in November, 1924, Local 185 has at present 450 members one of whom is a Negro. The initiation fee is \$25 payable in convenient terms and the dues are \$36 yearly payable \$3 monthly. Membership is open to any driver in the cleaning and dyeing industry. Mr. Cohen remarked further, "There are many Negroes working on the inside in the cleaning and dyeing plants, but they didn't seem to take to driving. You know, of course, that a driver does not merely drive a truck,—at the same time he collects and marks clothes, collects money, etc. Perhaps that's why Negroes didn't take to it."

Local 272—Garage Washers and Polishers<sup>64</sup>—This is a mixed local with both Negro and white officers. Negro workers first made definite efforts to get a local organized. Together with

<sup>63</sup> Interview with David Diamond, Secretary, July 26, 1935.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Julius G. Cohen, Secretary, September 24, 1935.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Harry Jacobs, Vice President, September 3, 1935.

the white garage workers they succeeded in 1929 in having local 272 organized. At that time—so that all of the workers could join—no initiation fee was charged them. At present the fee has been definitely established at \$99.00 payable in one sum in order "to protect the union from becoming infested with undesirable transient workers." The dues are \$24.00 yearly payable \$2.00 monthly. Although most of the Negro members are residents of Harlem, they are employed in the Bronx. Eighty-five percent of the Bronx workers are Negroes and fifteen percent of the Manhattan workers are Negroes. In some sections of Manhattan there are few Negro workers because the garage customers do not want them, and after all the customers are the "bosses". As to discrimination in the garages by employers or fellow employees, there is none. The union is too strong to allow any such thing, Mr. Jacobs remarked. In the local there are 2,000 Negroes in the total membership of 5,000.

Special efforts are made to organize Negro workers and garages in which they work. The method used is personal contact by organizers—both Negro and white and contacts by mixed organizational committees. All workers encountered readily join and soon become good and regular union men.

The Negro membership in this local is very active. At the meetings the Negro members are always present and ready to engage actively in the discussions and activities. On the Executive Board there are two Negroes, and there is a Negro business agent.

Local 643 — Funeral Chauffeurs <sup>88</sup> — Organized in 1903 and composed of 1100 members of whom none are Negroes. In 1933 Negro funeral chauffeurs of Harlem (there are none in other sections of Manhattan over which this local has jurisdiction) applied to this local for membership. A mixed organizational committee was created by the local to organize these workers and to plan a strike for that area to get union recognition in the establishments in which these chauffeurs worked. According to the Secretary of the local, they were made mem-

<sup>88</sup> Interview with William Cohen, Secretary-Treasurer, July 25, 1935.

bers of the local in 1934. As the downtown Manhattan funeral directors did not hire Negroes, they remained unemployed until the strike was called in late 1934—for union recognition in Harlem funeral parlors. Then, the Negro members “got the cold feet, failed to cooperate in the strike,” thereby causing its failure. Finally, these sixty Negro members quit paying their dues and dropped out of the union. Nothing has been done in the way of organizing Negro funeral chauffeurs since that time.

TELEGRAPHERS' UNION OF NORTH AMERICA, COMMERCIAL—NEW YORK EASTERN BROKERS DIVISION:

The New York division of this union has 250 members, none of whom are Negroes. A few remarks of the secretary are an adequate explanation of that condition. He stated, “Our members are the telegraphers of the brokers' offices and stock exchange buildings, and we don't have any Negroes. I don't see why you are interested in this union if we have no Negro members and if we have no dealing at all with Negroes, but since you insist I will say that our constitution states that any *white* person working in the telegraphic work is eligible for membership.”<sup>66</sup>

TRANSPORT WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION, MARINE:<sup>67</sup>—This union, an affiliate of the Industrial Workers' of the World, follows the policy of organizing every worker in a trade or industry regardless of craft, race, color, creed, political or religious affiliation, or any other distinction. Thus, in the Manhattan Branch Number 510 of the Transport Workers, the membership includes common deck hands, porters, etc., as well as captains, mates, pilots or masters. There was no way of telling from the records what race or color any worker was; however, an estimate that about one third of the union's membership was Negro was ventured. Of the 7,000 members, approximately 2,300 are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$2.00 and the dues are \$12.00 yearly or \$1.00 monthly.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with William J. Ryan, Secretary, September 26, 1935.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with John S. Morgan, General Organizer, September 26, 1935.



In its organizational work on the ship Branch 510 uses both Negro and white organizers. While no discrimination of members exists in any form whatsoever, according to Mr. Morgan, the branch realizes that it must use various or different means to get different groups of people into its membership; therefore, to make contact among the Negro marine workers, a Negro organizer is used. As members of the union all workers are equal in privileges and obligations. Although there are no Negro officers at present, stated Mr. Morgan, there has been one in the past. There was a member of the General Organizing Committee and of the Executive Board, too. His term has expired.

**TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION:**<sup>66</sup>—This union is based on the principle of one union in one industry, comprising all the crafts and occupations employed in the transit field in New York, such as motormen, switchmen, signal men, conductors, guards, agents, porters, track men, structure men, all the crafts in the repair shops, inspection barns, power houses, clerks, office workers, platform men, bus drivers, trolley operators and conductors. Unfortunately, Negroes in the transit field in Manhattan are employed in few of these crafts—many porters, few agents and few platform men. Because of that reason the 100 Negro members in the 4,500 membership of this recently organized union, 1934, are all porters. Despite that fact, the union considers organization of Negroes imperative to the success of the labor movement and has, therefore, made definite efforts to get Negro members. The methods used are contacts of prospective members by mixed committees and distribution of literature on the subject of Negroes in organized labor. The contact methods seem to be the better. Greatest objection raised by Negroes encountered is the expression of fear of the insincerity of the union. But, it has a definite program on foot to try to get its Negro members into the skilled position of the trade—such as engineers, motormen, conductors, etc. The union maintains that the objection is not with the union but with the employers

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Austin Hyan, General Secretary, July 25, 1935.

who cannot really be forced to take Negroes into the better class positions. Great prospects are held for the accomplishment in the near future of these efforts.

This union seems to be quite genuine in its aims and policies regarding the Negro member. Three Negroes are on the General Executive Board—The Delegates' Council; one Negro is on the Affairs Committee (Social); one Negro is on the Editorial Board of the Union paper—Transport Workers' Bulletin; some Negro members contribute to each issue of the Transport Workers' Bulletin.

#### DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL SERVICE

##### BARBERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION, JOURNEYMEN:

Local 9—Journeyman Barbers:<sup>69</sup>—Early in 1935 a group of 31 old barbers, including one Negro, all of whom have been members of the International Union through one local or another for about 25 years, decided to retire from active work. Desiring to hold on to the benefits which the union offered to active union members, they banded themselves together in Local 9 so that they could maintain the status "active member". The acting secretary of the local stated, "We organized for one purpose—to save our insurance. The International Union gives all of its members an insurance death benefit of \$500 if they are active members of a local when they die. We paid dues for all these years, and all of us have only a few years to go, so we organized into a local to save that \$500."

##### BUILDING SERVICE EMPLOYEES' INTERNATIONAL UNION:

Local 32A—Manhattan Superintendents<sup>70</sup> organized in 1924. Local 32A consists only of "high class" superintendents, janitors or assistant superintendents—that is, those who make over \$50.00 a week. Those low paid janitors and superintendents and those who work merely for their rent belong to the Harlem Council. Although Negroes have been members from the very beginning of Local 32A, the union had difficulty in organizing

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Mr. Epstein, Acting Secretary, September 18, 1935.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with E. Clausen, Secretary, September 6, 1935.

them. Because of this, a Mr. McLeod, a Negro organizer, now chairman of the Harlem Council, thought that he could organize the Negro workers. He was given the opportunity to do so, which resulted in the establishment of the Harlem Council in April, 1934. "But," said the secretary of Local 32A, "this is only a temporary arrangement for the purpose of organizing the Negro workers. Now that they are organized, we expect to consolidate the two groups. Negroes have been fooled so much by white men that they have no faith in them; nevertheless, McLeod did a good job." However, before the Harlem Council was organized, some of the Negro members of local 32A claimed that "they were not at home in local 32A." As an effort to solve that problem a charter was granted to these members to organize another local. They then organized Local 14, B. S. E. I. U. Within a few months' time the whole project failed, and its leaders have disappeared. Although most of the Negro building service workers belong to the Harlem Council, there are quite a few in Local 32A. Stating that he had no accurate means of telling the exact number, he estimated that there were about 125 in the total membership of about 3,700. Few of these are very active in the meeting and activities of the Union. "One is a sticker. He's in everything we put on." There are no Negro officers because none can qualify to hold office, the qualification being three continuous years of membership in good standing. "There are always Negro members," he said, "but none of them hold continuous membership. They come and go." The initiation fee is \$10.00 and the dues are \$24.00 yearly, payable \$2.00 monthly.

Local 32C—Hotel and Hotel Apartment Workers<sup>61</sup>—Organized in May 1935, Local 32C now has 1,472 members of whom 2 are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$2.00 and the dues \$12.00 yearly, payable \$1.00 monthly.

The jurisdiction of this local extends over bell boys, elevator operators, doormen, porters, chamber-maids, etc. who are employed in hotels and hotel apartments, and membership is

<sup>61</sup> Interview with C. Haulian, President, October 16, 1935.

limited to workers in these groups who are employed at the time of making application. All members enter the union through the organization of Hotels and Hotel apartments by the union. At such times, all workers at any given hotel or apartment are made members. Negroes working in such places are, therefore, made full members of the union. But two Negroes have been met under these conditions. According to the president they are "excellent" members.

Local 135—Wardrobe and Checkroom Attendants.<sup>63</sup> Membership in this local is composed of wardrobe and checkroom attendants of night clubs. The initiation fee is \$5.00 and dues are \$13.00 yearly, payable 25 cents weekly. At present the membership is 500, no Negroes. Mr. Jacobs, the business manager of the local, explained, "Our work is limited to night clubs. So far, we have organized only two hot-spots in Harlem, the Cotton Club and the Ubangi Club. Both of these use white wardrobe and check room attendants; therefore, we have no Negro members yet. Maybe later we'll organize some of the club where they work."

Local 149—Building Office Cleaners.<sup>64</sup> Local 149 was organized in August, 1934 at which time it affiliated with the B.S.E.I.U. Its membership was at first composed of cleaners working in office buildings; later, it extended its jurisdiction to cover domestic workers. This move was taken when the Domestic Workers' Union Local 149B., B. S. E. I. U., organized in early 1935, became non-self-sustaining and, consequently lost its charter in September, 1935. Practically all of its members—mainly Negroes—then became members of Local 149, swelling the Negro membership of this local to its present figure of 150. The total membership of Local 149 is 2500.

The initiation fee is \$2.00, and the dues are \$12.00 yearly payable \$1.00 monthly. "There are very few Negroes working as office cleaners in the big office buildings," said Mr. Schwarz,

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Ben Jacobs, Manager, October, 1935.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Mr. Schwarz, Business Manager, October 17, 1935.

the manager. "Most of our Negro members are domestic workers. It is one of the greatest problems we have ever faced to organize domestic workers because they are so scattered, usually just one to a family house. If they worked in big groups we would be able to contact them and their employers and do some real work, but as it is now, they are not very active and come to meetings only once in a while. Just how we can tackle that problem is still another problem for us."

Local 149 has had no general strikes. Several individual office buildings strikes were called to demand better working conditions. No Negroes were involved in these.

Local 155—Exterminators and Fumigators.<sup>64</sup> There is but one Negro in this local, and he joined in July, 1935. The total membership is 400. While no apprenticeship is required, a 90-day experience period is. The initiation fee is \$10.00, payable in one sum, and the dues are \$24.00 yearly, payable \$2.00 monthly. The additional requirement that each member must be a New York licensed exterminator is a definite check on the number of applicants. Mr. Burns stated, "But there is only one licensed Negro exterminator in Greater New York. We only take in licensed workers."

Since its inception this union has had but one strike—a strike in July 1935—to organize the workers in the Permo Exterminatory Company on Clinton Street. It was in this shop that the Negro member was then working. This Negro worker did not want to join the union and, consequently, remained at work in the shop as a non-union man when the strike was on. Later, however, he joined.

Local 164—Office and Loft Building Superintendents. An interview with the president evoked a few statements of the relations of Negroes to this local.<sup>65</sup>

"We don't give a — whether a man is black, brown or yellow. As long as he pays his dues and does his work, he's O. K. with

<sup>64</sup> Interview with T. E. Burns, Secretary-Treasurer, August 22, 1935.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with James A. Corrigan, President, August 29, 1935.

us." He continued, "So far as our records go, we have no way of telling the activities of the Negro members from the other members. All I know is that they get along well." He estimated that out of 1210 members of the local, 121 are Negroes and stated that the same dues and fees go for all applicants and members.

As this is a recently organized local, 1934, it has not yet completed its constitution; nevertheless, he stated that it is the policy so far to admit any qualified building superintendent to membership. Also, he read the pledge each member takes when initiated. In addition to swearing his support to the rules and regulations, etc. of the local, each member states: "I promise never to discriminate against a brother on account of race, color, creed or nationality." Negroes in this local are in every sense full members enjoying all the privileges and sharing all the obligation of membership. There is a Negro organizer and one Negro Executive Board member.

#### THE BUILDING TRADES

ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, CHEMISTS AND TECHNICIANS, FEDERATION OF:<sup>66</sup> A section of the constitution of the Federation—Article V, Section 2, reads, "The Federation shall make no discrimination or restriction because of private or public belief, political, religious or other affiliation, sex, race, color, creed, or nationality." This Federation, organized about the end of 1932, claims a membership of approximately 3,500 of which not more than 50 are Negroes. The initiation fee is the equivalent of 2 months' dues which range from \$3.00 to \$12.00 yearly. Negroes have been members since the inception of the New York chapter. "They have been very active and loyal," stated the general organizer. "One of our early moves was to get a Negro engineer, Louis, who was working on a P. W. A. job as a laborer reclassified and given work as an engineer—the work for which he was qualified." A Negro member is secretary of one of the craft sections of the Engineers' section, and

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Marcel Scherer, General Organizer, October 26, 1935.

five Negroes are on the Executive Boards of the various sections.

This Federation has applied for affiliation with the A. F. of L. It is the belief of the organizer that the charter has been delayed mainly because the Federation has an Industrial Section which includes in its members all laborers and non-skilled work used regularly to assist workers in the crafts covered by the union.

**BRICKLAYERS', MASONS' AND PLASTERERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF AMERICA:**

Local 52—Tile Layers<sup>67</sup>—That qualifications for membership in this union are rigidly enforced was pointed out. The four year apprenticeship is usually served in the Tile Layers Helpers Union. Also, an efficiency test is administered the applicant by three expert mechanics of the union. In addition, an initiation fee of \$100.00 payable as the applicant can afford, is enforced. The dues are \$60 yearly or \$5 monthly. "These qualifications are so determined that they protect the union members and let in only the expert mechanics." The one Negro member out of the total membership of 1,200 served an apprenticeship in the Tile Layers' Helpers' Union and then entered this union in 1903. A few years ago, another Negro—accepted as a transfer member—was in local 52; however, after a few good jobs, he dropped out in 1933. The two Negroes who gained membership to this union are both expert mechanics. As union men, they were "about as active as the average fellow." The old one "never aspired to holding an office" in the union; thus, he is now just an ordinary member although he has been in the union for many years. In the lockout of 1933 and the general strike of 1904, no Negroes were involved.

Local 84—Journeyman Stone Setters<sup>68</sup>—There are no Negroes in this local of 275 members. In fact, there never were any Negro members. Mr. Watson, the President stated that there are a few Negro workers in this trade in the south. "I worked

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Andres Brady, Secretary, August 8, 1935.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with James Watson, President, September 3, 1935.

with one in Lexington, Kentucky," he said, "but I have never come across one in New York. Not even have I had a transfer or traveling member to come to this local." Continuing, he stated that he thought no Negro worker would have difficulty getting membership in New York, not because discrimination is prohibited by the constitution but because the men themselves had no feeling of racial antagonism or superiority. "If they only applied, they would be admitted. The fact is that there is evidently not one Negro stone setter in New York City."

Local 84 requires an apprenticeship of four years for beginners, an initiation fee of \$100.00 payable in installments and yearly dues of \$48.00 payable \$4.00 monthly. Before applicants who are expert stone setters are admitted to membership they must pass a qualifying examination.

**BRIDGE AND STRUCTURAL IRON WORKERS, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF:**

Local 170—Riggers and Machinery Movers<sup>60</sup>—Organized in 1903 and affiliated with the I. A. B. & S. I. W. in 1915. Membership is 102—no Negroes. Of the situation the secretary of the union remarked, "I've tried like hell to organize Negro workers and get them into this union, but they never cared to advance themselves. They stick right under the arms of the employers. They just won't join the union." For a long time this local has been trying to organize the workers of the Belmont Rigging & Hoisting Company of Brooklyn, the Harlem River Trucking Company of Manhattan and the United Rigging Company of Brooklyn—all companies owned by white men who employed many Negro workers—and the Howard Contracting Company, a Negro company employing Negro workers only. The greatest obstacles met in this organizational work were the attitude of satisfaction the Negroes had and their unwillingness to take a chance for improvement in working conditions and increased wages through unionization.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Louis Kelter, Secretary, September 26, 1935.



Local 447—Ornamental and Architectural Iron, Bronze and Metal Specialists <sup>70</sup>—This local reported that it had 601 members—no Negroes, and that its initiation fee and dues were \$100 and \$73.50 yearly, respectively. It has never had Negro members.

Local 455—Ornamental and Architectural Iron, Bronze and Metal Specialists <sup>71</sup>—organized in 1914. The official of this union was L. Smetana, Secretary. At the beginning he estimated that about 50 or 60 of the total membership of approximately 900 were Negroes. Wishing to show that these were well represented on the official staff of the union, he pointed out that there are two Negro shop chairmen, James Sell and Jene Gadson; that the recording secretary, Charles Isaac, is a Negro; and that the ex-recording secretary, James Reed, was a Negro. "Negroes are good workers and good union men," he stated, "but they do not attend meetings regularly. Instead, they prefer to ask me, when I make my round of the shops, what happened at the meetings, and they are always eager to know." He explained also that special efforts are made to encourage and organize the Negro workers. Usually, mixed committees direct organization drives. "The success of the labor movement," he said, "depends on the cooperation and organization of all workers, whether white or black, and in our union they all work together in a swell way."

From the employers and their representatives no discriminatory practices are tolerated. In the strike of 1935—the only one called to protest against discrimination—a foreman was charged with discriminating against and firing Negro workers in the Grand Iron Works merely because they were black. The local called a strike which lasted several weeks. Finally, the workers were reinstated and the company was made to sign an agreement not to practice any further discrimination.

<sup>70</sup> Correspondence with John M. Schilling, Secretary-Treasurer, September 18, 1935.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with L. Smetana, Secretary, August 5, 1935.

CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA, UNITED BROTHERHOOD  
OF:

Local 135—Carpenters <sup>72</sup>—This local merely reported 550 members—No Negroes. It has had no experience with Negro workers except as strike breakers on several occasions.

Local 246—Shop Woodwork and Machine Man <sup>73</sup>—Organized 1917. This union has only one Negro member out of its total membership of 670. This Negro member is the only Negro shopman in Greater New York. He works at The Superior Fireproof Door and Sash Company, Bronx. He is very active in the meetings and is considered one of the union's righthand men; however, he holds no office or official position in the union. He has been with the union since its origin. "When I was a workman in the shops and a delegate, Cornell and I used to work together. I never met a finer fellow. All of the brothers liked him too," spoke the secretary about the Negro member.

Local 385—Outside carpenters <sup>74a</sup>—Organized in 1901. Early in the interview, Mr. Castelli, secretary-treasurer, pointed out that "We have a Negro local in Harlem, Local 1888 I think, at 30 West 129 Street. That is the main reason why we have such few Negro members in local 385." Local 385 has a total membership of 600, of which 7 are Negroes. The Negro membership has been as high as 14, but since they are inactive and fail to pay dues regularly, many have been automatically expelled from membership. No special efforts are made to organize Negro workers; however, when they are employed in a shop which is being organized by the union, they are brought into union membership if they so desire. The union had a general strike in 1916 and has had many individual shop strikes at all times. These strikes have been mainly for the purpose of getting better working conditions and for organizing or "closing" a shop. In all of these strikes where Negroes were in-

<sup>72</sup> Correspondence with the Secretary, August 15, 1935.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Gus Damstadt, Financial Secretary, August 12, 1935.

<sup>74a</sup> Interview with B. J. Castelli, Secretary-Treasurer, August 12, 1935.

volved, they were quite loyal to the union. "I find Negro workers among our best workers," said Mr. Castelli. "If they were more active in the meetings, they would be the best."

Local 608—Carpenters<sup>74</sup>—Organized in 1914. At one time, there were about 20 Negroes, but most of these lost their membership because of their inability to pay their dues when they were unemployed. "The Negro membership is so small," said the financial secretary, "that they are inactive and hold no offices. You can't expect them to hold offices if there are only 3 among the 1,097 whites." This union has had few strikes. There was one in 1932 and there is now the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) strike in which Local 608 is participating. In reference to the 1932 strike, he stated, "I'm sorry to say that the Negroes worked as strike breakers. These unorganized Negroes seem to shine as strike breakers, and the Negroes more than any other group like to work as strike breakers." The Negro members of the union at that time, however, participated in the strike as fellow union workers.

Local 1456—Dock and Pier Carpenters<sup>75</sup>—Charles Johnson, President and Business Manager, spoke about his Local. "Negroes make some of the best union men I have had. They pay dues and attend meetings. One of our Negro members was a trustee of the local and a foreman on the job where he worked. Right now we have several Negro workers on the 38th Street tunnel job."

The local was organized in 1889. Soon after in 1895, Negroes became members by making application directly to the office of the local. The number of Negro members has always been small because "very few Negroes work as dock carpenters."

Local 1456 has conducted general strikes in 1932, 1920 and 1921, 1915, 1914 and at several other times. All of these have been called to maintain union conditions. In all of them Negro members of the local participated as loyal fellow-unionists.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with David Scanlan, Financial Secretary, August 21, 1935.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Charles Johnson, President and Business Manager, October 4, 1935.

However, in the 1932 strike Negro members of other locals of the U. B. of C. & J. of A. worked "unknowingly" as strike breakers. "They were brought in from Baltimore and Philadelphia and not told that a strike was going on. As soon as we told them of the strike, they quit the job and went home. In fact, we paid their fares home. That's what I call real union loyalty and cooperation and that's why I say they make the best members," said Mr. Johnson.

Local 1536—Timbermen<sup>16</sup>—Local 1536, organized recently in February, 1935, has 166 members, 1 of whom is a Negro. The initiation fee, payable in installments, is \$75.00, and the yearly dues are \$24.00, payable monthly at \$2.00. All members of the union have joined through the organization of all workers on the various jobs.

"Strange as it seems", said Mr. Geffen, Secretary-Treasurer, "although the work of the members of this union is merely rough and semi-skilled, the kind you usually find Negroes doing, this local is made up almost entirely of Italians. Most of the Negro workers in the subway and tunnel construction work are laborers. As soon as they become timbermen, we will get them in the union."

Local 1657—Carpenters<sup>17</sup>—Andrew Wood, Financial Secretary stated, "Our work is cabinet making, trim-work, etc. We have only three colored members and they are good paying members who attend meetings regularly." From his other few remarks it was pointed out that the local was organized in 1923 at which time some Negroes joined. In the following years of prosperity the membership—both Negro and white—was very high, but since the depression the total membership of the local has decreased to its present number of 480. There are no Negro officers.

The apprenticeship term is four years. Initiation fees are \$10.00 for apprentices and \$30.00 for journeymen. Dues are \$24.00 yearly for journeymen and \$18.00 for apprentices.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Mr. Joseph Geffen, Secretary-Treasurer, October 4, 1935.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Andrew Wood, Financial Secretary, October 4, 1935.

Local 2090—Carpenters <sup>78</sup>—Organized in 1918. There are no Negroes in this local of 800 members. There were some up to five years ago, but they all dropped out because of non-payment of dues. This was caused by the depression, stated Mr. Schwuchow, financial secretary. The Negroes who were members were full-fledged members, but "they were passive members. They had little interest in the affairs of the union."

Local 2725—Carpenters <sup>79</sup>—Local 2725, organized in 1920, has always been a very small local of all white members. Its total membership at present is 80. Its initiation fee is \$30.00 payable in installments and dues \$24.00 yearly payable \$2.00 monthly.

Mr. Carr, Secretary, stated, "We make no bar against Negroes. We haven't any in our membership because they never applied for membership. Since the beginning, this local has been made up of a group of friends. That's why it's so small."

**ELECTRICAL WORKERS, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF:**

Local 3—Electrical Workers <sup>80</sup>—Organized in 1902. Speaking of some of the activities of this local in regard to Negro members, its President, Mr. Kirkman, said, "I can sum up the whole situation for this union in one sentence. We have no Negro members. As far as I know, Negroes never applied for membership in this union; therefore, we have had no occasion to deal with them." Further conversation brought to light the fact that this is a very large union, having about 6000 members. One of the qualifications for full membership is a very long term of apprenticeship—seven years; however, boys sixteen years of age are accepted as apprentices. Negro youths do not get in as apprentices; consequently, they cannot later qualify for membership. Mr. Kirkman states that as far as he knows, no effort was ever made to encourage Negro youths to join as

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Edward Schwuchow, Financial Secretary, August 30, 1935.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Robert Carr, Secretary, October 17, 1935.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Mr. Kirkman, President, August 9, 1935.

apprentices, and, in fact, no thought was even given to the matter.

In the Subway strike in 1935 and in the many individual strikes held over a period of years, no Negroes were involved. This accounts in part, believes Mr. Kirkman, for the fact that the union has never had brought to its attention the question of the Negro worker.

**ELEVATOR CONSTRUCTORS, INTERNATIONAL UNION OF:<sup>61</sup>**

Local 1—Elevator Constructors—Organized in 1894. William J. Facon, Acting Secretary, stating that this is a very dangerous type of work requiring a high degree of skill and accuracy, added that because of these conditions in elevator construction, there were no Negro members in this union. He estimated that the total membership is 1500. An initiation fee is \$200.00, and yearly dues are \$54.00, \$13.50 quarterly. Although membership is opened to all citizens of the United States, the union feels that it is not necessary to organize the Negro workers or to train them in this type of work. "Since they offer no problem to the union as a possible strike breaker," the union does not in any way concern itself about the possibility of a Negro membership and, consequently, makes no effort to encourage Negro workers to do this type of work. In the last strike of the union, over 20 years ago, no Negroes were involved. Mr. Facon feels that not even in the distant future will Negroes become competent at this work and join this union.

**HOD CARRIERS', BUILDING AND COMMON LABORERS' UNION OF AMERICA, INTERNATIONAL:**

Local 6A—Cement and Concrete workers<sup>62</sup> Organized in 1929 and composed of 600 members of whom 10 are Negroes. Although Negroes have been admitted to full membership in this mixed local since its inception in 1929, the secretary reported that they have been very inactive. Because of this condition which he thinks prevails in many mixed locals he proposes that,

<sup>61</sup> Interview with William J. Facon, Acting Secretary, August 27, 1935.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with N. J. Cuner, Secretary, July 29, 1935.

when there is a small number of Negro workers in any industry, they should be organized along with the other workers in one mixed local and when there is a large number of Negro workers, they should be organized into a separate local. His reason is that in an entirely Negro local, the members would feel freer to take the floor, speak, ask questions, and, in general, take a more active part in the union activity. In mixed group as his local he feels that Negroes are timid and inactive and always shy about speaking. The fact that a few take active part or even hold offices does not justify keeping the majority in a position where they are uneasy. When asked if something could be done to develop the majority, he stated that he had not thought of that, but that, further, he felt that the Negro would always feel depressed when in mixed groups.

Local 10—Bricklayers' Helpers <sup>63</sup>—Organized in 1930 and composed of 1200 members of whom one tenth or 120 are Negroes. It is reported by the President of the local that since the origin of the local Negroes have been "good" members who found it possible to pay the initiation fee of \$52.00 and find it convenient to maintain the dues of \$1.25 per month. They are fairly regular in attendance at meetings, and although there are no Negro officers, "the Negro members are treated just like the other workers and they are getting a fair break."

Local 30 — Plasterers' Helpers <sup>64</sup> — Organized in 1891. The Negro members of this union were at one time very active. During the years of 1928 and 1929 there was a Negro recording secretary. Since that time the number of Negroes has decreased to 4 from 50. The present total membership of the local is about 1,100. Many of the Negro members, like the others, dropped out of the local because there was a scarcity of work. Not being able to get work, they did not pay dues and, finally, just quit going to union meetings.

Up to 1926, the union had strikes almost yearly. Since then there were two, one in 1932 and the other in 1935. All of the

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mr. Guardio, President, August 28, 1935.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Mr. Suazzo, Secretary, September 4, 1935.

strikes were called to improve some phase of the working conditions, hours, wages, etc. Negro members of the union were usually loyal; however, at times some of them would not quit with the union. The proportion was not greater than the proportion of white members. At the close of the strikes those members who worked as strike breakers paid the fine imposed upon them by the union and retained their membership. In every case many of the unorganized workers who served as strike breakers were organized and made members of the union. These incidents did not cause racial ill feeling because "both Negroes and whites worked as strike breakers.

Local 45—Compressed Air Workers <sup>85</sup>—In July, 1935, this local was organized, being the outcome of an amalgamation of three locals of the I. H. C. & C. L. U. of A. These locals were #63—organized in 1918, #67—organized in 1927 and #68—organized in 1931. Two of these locals, 67 and 68 were Jersey City locals and one, 63, a New York local. In each of them the membership had decreased to such an extent that the amalgamation was necessary. During the years of the individual existence of these locals, there was a high percentage—40% of Negroes. Since those boom times—1921 to 1931—the Negro workers and the others, too, have not had any work; consequently, the union dropped their names because they did not pay dues. Now, only about 15% are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$50.00 payable in three months, and the dues are \$12.00 yearly, payable \$1.00 monthly.

The secretary-treasurer stated that the Negro and white members of the union get along together in a very fine way. "In fact," he said, "There are at times colored bosses. There's one now at the 38th Street Tunnel." At this juncture, he explained that the union does no hiring or firing. This is done by the bosses who are union men employed by the contractors. It is up to the boss to take whom he pleases and to fire whom he pleases. He is not supposed to discriminate on account of

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Pat O'Malley, Secretary-Treasurer, September 12, 1935.



race, or color. In addition to the Negro bosses there is a Negro member of the Executive Board. The other Negro members are not so very active—not attending the meetings often or displaying any interest in the union's problems.

There are several types of workers in this local. Among them are electricians, blasters, drillers, iron workers and common laborers. Most of the Negro workers do the blasting, drilling and iron work; there are no electricians, and few common laborers as most of this work is done by ex-miners—Irish and Welsh for the most part.

Local 95—Housewreckers<sup>66</sup>—Organized in 1911 and composed of 1,600 members of whom 200 are Negroes. Records of the local show that Negroes have been members since 1911 when it was organized and that they have always been at least 10 percent of the total membership. The business manager who has been a member since 1911 reported, however, that to the best of his memory he could not recall a Negro's holding an office in the union. On the other hand, they have at all times been good dues-paying members. During the two big strikes of the local in 1911 and 1932 Negro members of the local were "100% loyal—more than can be said of other members." But, many imported Negroes and others were used to break these strikes. Because the local feels that these men were merely professional strike breakers no efforts have been made to organize them.

HOUSEWRECKERS' UNION, INDEPENDENT:<sup>67</sup> This independent union, not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, was organized in 1932 by a Negro. At that time Negro membership was high, far above that of the whites, but today the whole situation has changed. Of the 450 members 10 are Negroes. The secretary, now a white man, stated that soon after the founding of the union the Negro membership began to decrease "in spite of the friendly attitude among the workers." "The Negro members seemed not to feel altogether at home in the

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Peter Cassidy, July 27, 1935.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Mr. Marionoff, Secretary, July 26, 1935.

meetings and social functions of the union and they slowly fell out." The organizer of the union cannot be located, and the ten Negro members seldom attend the meetings. As a matter of fact, the whole union is now in a very quiet and inactive stage.

INSOLATORS AND ASBESTOS WORKERS, HEAT AND FROST, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF:

Local 12—Asbestos Workers<sup>82</sup>—This local was organized in 1903 and has not had in its 32 years of existence any Negro members. Its present membership is 563. Among the qualifications for membership is a four-year apprenticeship and an initiation fee of \$100.00. The fee is payable \$25.00 quarterly during the first year of one's membership. A few years ago the International Association of which this local is a member made a survey to determine the number of workers in this trade. Throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada only nine Negro workers were found, and all of these nine were members of some local of the International. "As for New York," said the secretary, "there are no Negroes in this work and not any have ever applied for membership." He explains further that each local has its own constitution and points out that the constitution of this local reads in its membership clause that "any white man who is a citizen of the United States or has declared his intentions of becoming a citizen and is over 21 years old" is eligible for membership. "Back in 1903," he stated, "when the constitution was written, there was no idea of protection of workers or of discrimination when the words 'white man' was put in the constitution. There were no Negroes in the work and no one thought of that. If the occasion arose, I am sure that that phrase would be either overlooked or scratched out." As pointed out above there are very few workers in this trade. All the shops in New York are "closed" and, consequently, the only way one can get to work in them is through the union. A high percentage—about 82%—of the workers are unemployed. Dues have been suspended for most of these and unemployment benefits are given as far as possible. As a result of this situ-

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Joseph Flynn, Financial Secretary, August 19, 1935.

ation, the union is not at present taking in any new members. Thus, there is little prospect for Negroes' joining.

**MARBLE, SLATE AND STONE POLISHERS, RUBBERS AND SAWYERS,  
TILE AND MARBLE SETTERS' HELPERS AND TERRAZZO HELPERS,  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF:**

Local 5 — Machine Stone Workers, Rubbers and Helpers<sup>89</sup> — Organized in 1880. The membership of this local has taken a great fall from about 900 to the present 200. Among these are no Negroes, but there were four, three sawyers and one rubber, before the World War. At that time they left the local to work in the ship yard where work was more abundant. No other Negro has applied for membership. The president remarked, "Negroes are not made for this kind of work anyway." Because he believes in that assertion, he as president of the union has never encouraged the soliciting of a Negro membership and probably will never foster any such move. Then came the contradictory remark that those Negroes who were members were expert mechanics at their work. They were full fledged members of the union and got along well with their fellow union members.

Other formal information of the union is:—Initiation fee is \$55.00, payable in installments, yearly dues of \$36.00, payable \$3.00 monthly; the strikes were general strikes of 1884, 1898 and 1904 and in which the Negro members of the union participated as fellow unionists.

Local 35 — Mosaic and Terrazzo Workers' Helpers<sup>90</sup> — John Olivari, secretary, explained that the mosaic and terrazzo work are Italian arts and are done solely by Italians; therefore, the entire membership of the Local 35 is Italian.

The local was organized in 1890 and affiliated with the above International in 1921. It has 360 members. The initiation fee is \$178.00 payable in three months and the dues are \$24.00, \$2.00 monthly.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Joseph John, President, and Samuel Lazarus, Executive Board Member, September 3, 1935.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with John Olivari, Secretary, September 16, 1935.

Local 88—Tile Layers' Helpers<sup>81</sup>—Organized in 1883 and composed of 750 members of whom none are Negroes. The records of the organization show that one Negro was a member about 1900: he transferred to the Tile Layers Union. Another was recently a member, but he dropped out. Membership is usually given on the recommendation of employers of workers in their shops or through personal application. Since there are no Negroes in the Helpers' Union and since the four year apprenticeship and efficiency test requirements are rigidly enforced, there is obviously little or no chance of a Negro's getting into the Tile Layers' Union.

PAINTERS, DECORATORS AND PAPER HANGERS OF AMERICA,  
BROTHERHOOD OF:

Local 51—Painters<sup>82</sup>—A trustee 32 years, a member of this local reviewed the situation of the local, saying among other things, "I've been in here a long time, and I've seen them come in and go out. This union was only three years old when I entered, and as long as I can remember, there always was at least one or perhaps two Negroes among us." The union was organized in 1900. It has today 930 members—6 of whom are Negroes. For beginners a four-year apprenticeship is required; the present initiation fee is \$15.00 and the dues are \$18.00, \$1.50 monthly. Most of the Negro members came in as full fledged painters through direct application to the union.

There are no Negro officers in Local 51. On this point, he said, "Well, you can't expect any of them to be an officer because they don't come out to meetings regularly. All they do is keep their dues paid up." Local 51 had one big strike in 1934 and several before that date. In all of these the Negro workers "just did like the rest of us." "We don't have any trouble with our Negro members," concluded Mr. Fox. "We have more trouble with the foreigners. They'll work for practically nothing."

<sup>81</sup> Interview with James Cronin, Secretary, August 8, 1935.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Mr. Fox, Trustee, September 11, 1935.

Local 261 — Decorators and Painters<sup>83</sup> — Organized in 1904. This local is described by the secretary as "a radical Socialist group." He said that his union was not hostile to Negro members, but it, on the other hand, did not encourage them. The problem is with the employers and in turn the people whom they serve. "The white employers will not take Negroes, because the tenants in the apartments altered and decorated object." Even if there were no hindrances to the Negro workers, not many of them could qualify for membership because "they don't get a chance to work on the outside so that they can meet the requirement of long experience for membership."

There are 1,300 members of the local, none of whom are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$15.00 and the dues are \$18.00 yearly, payable \$1.50 monthly. While no apprenticeship is required for membership, an applicant must be an experienced worker.

Despite this indifferent attitude, it does cooperate with Negro labor movements. In this connection it sent a delegation to the Negro Labor Conference, July 20, 1935, New York City. It also assists such groups financially.

Local 829 — United Scenic Artists<sup>84</sup> — Organized in 1918. First, it was explained that this local has jurisdiction over all workers in Eastern United States. In its membership there were at one time two Negroes. One, a New York man who joined in 1918, dropped out in 1925. He was one of the first members. The other Negro member now in the union is a resident of Pittsburgh.

In the local there are 339 members. The initiation fee is \$500.00, \$250.00 with application and \$250.00 with initiation, and the yearly dues are \$48.00. Membership is open to "any person who follows any branch of work within the jurisdiction of the scenic artists crafts for a livelihood."

The two Negroes who were admitted to membership got in when some theatre and shop workers among whom they were

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Max Gaft, Secretary, September 3, 1935.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Fred Marshall, Business Agent, August 29, 1935.

organized. The union has also a plan of taking in students by application. No Negroes have applied. On the outlook for the Negro worker in this field the Business Agent said, "To be perfectly frank I don't think that there is much for the Negro worker to look for. This is not an employment in which big groups of workers are hired but a work where one is on his own; therefore, I think Negroes will not do well in it."

Local 1087—Glaziers<sup>88</sup>—organized in 1915 and composed of 362 members of whom none are Negroes. This is another local which reports never having had any experience with Negro workers because there are none, according to its knowledge, in the line of work it covers.

**PLASTERERS AND CEMENT FINISHERS, OPERATIVE, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA:**<sup>89</sup>

Local 780—Cement Masons. Of the 750 members there are 50 Negroes. The initiation fee of \$211.00 is conveniently payable in installments determined by the ability of the applicant to pay, and the yearly dues, \$18.00, are payable \$1.50 monthly. If one is not a full fledged mechanic when making application, a three-year apprenticeship term is required of him.

Since its origin in 1916 Negroes have been members of this local and have been very active as members. "They take part in all of the union activities," said Mr. Christina, secretary. "Last term, 1930-1933, there was a Negro member of the Executive Board." There are at present, however, no Negro officers.

**PLUMBERS, STEAM FITTERS AND HELPERS, ALTERATION:**<sup>90</sup> In this independent union, not affiliated with the A. F. of L. or any International union, there are 450 members of whom 4 are Negroes. It has an initiation fee of \$3.00 and requires dues of \$13.00 yearly for mechanics and \$8.10 for helpers. Two

<sup>88</sup> Interview with William Flasher, Record Keeper, July 26, 1935.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with James J. Christina, Secretary, September 9, 1935.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with M. Kahme, Organizer, September 13, 1935.

of the Negro members are mechanics and the other two are helpers.

During the first year of organization in 1933 it had a "great Negro leader," Fred Welsch. He, a member of the Executive Board, was "best strike leader" and "half of the brains of the union." He died in November, 1934. Since his death the few Negro members have lost interest in the union. The organizer remarked, "You've almost got to club them in to the meetings. They won't come around, and they will not accept any offices in the union." He said he wished that he could come across another man like Welsch because the task of organizing Harlem workers in this line—which Welsch had quite ably begun—is now going undone. However, he plans to put forth definite efforts to resume the organization work in Harlem.

The union had an organizational strike in 1933 and several small strikes in 1934 and 1935, called for improvement of working conditions. When the Negro members were involved, they struck with the union. No Negro scabs were encountered.

**SLATE, TILE AND COMPOSITION ROOFERS, DAMP AND WATER PROOF WORKERS' ASSOCIATION, UNITED:**

Local 8—Composition Roofers:<sup>88</sup> Reporting 700 members none of whom are Negroes, the office record keeper of the union made one further statement, "We don't bar Negroes by constitution or ritual. There may be many of them in this trade, but none are members of this union—in New York anyway."

STONE CUTTERS' ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA, JOURNEYMEN: New York Division.<sup>89</sup> This is another union in which there are no Negro members. Its total membership is 650. It has an initiation fee of \$75.00 and dues of \$2.50 monthly. After sharpening his memory a bit, the charter member, Mr. Martin, recalled that about forty years ago there was one Negro member in the union. "I don't know what became of him," Mr. Martin

<sup>88</sup> Interview with office Record Keeper (name withheld), October 26, 1935.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Mr. Martin, Charter member and Executive Board Member, September 3, 1935.

said. "He may be dead by now." He believes that there are no Negro stone cutters in New York and that there were no applications from any whom they might not have known. Further, he seemed to think that the prospect for Negro membership is dull because of the long apprenticeship requirement. In order to qualify for membership, one must be an expert stone cutter or must serve an apprenticeship. "But since Negroes do not go in for apprenticeship, they will probably never gain membership."

#### FOOD, LIQUOR AND TOBACCO INDUSTRIES

##### BAKERY AND CONFECTIONERY WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF AMERICA:

Local 1—Bakers<sup>100</sup>—Organized in 1886. At present there are 560 members of the union—no Negroes. The initiation fee is \$3.00 and the yearly dues are \$32.40, payable \$2.70 monthly. The union has no program regarding Negro workers and does not plan to start one in the future. In fact, it does not really feel that it is necessary to organize the Negro workers in this trade.

Mr. Haberer, Secretary, commented, "About 12 or 13 years ago, there were two Negroes in our union. They were working in a bakery shop on Lenox Avenue when we organized it. They disappeared and we have neither seen nor heard anything of them since they left."

Local 50—Baking Factory Workers<sup>101</sup>—Although this union had been affiliated from 1929 to 1934 with the Factory Workers Branch of the Amalgamated Food Workers Union, it has become a local of the B. & C. W. I. U. of A. since May 6, 1934. Local 50 has done a "good job" in organizing the workers in the baking factories and in securing for them better working conditions and higher wages. It organizes on the industrial basis and takes in all of the workers in a factory regardless of what they do. Most of these factory workers are unskilled:

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Mr. Haberer, Secretary, September 3, 1935.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Mr. Gund, Secretary-Treasurer, September 13, 1935.



they merely do mechanical work. One or two master bakers can control over a hundred of these unskilled machine operators. In two of the factories organized by this local—Gottfried Bakeries at 51st Street and 11th Avenue and at 165th Street and Union Avenue—there are a few Negro workers. They do the same unskilled work as the other workers.

The two shops mentioned were among the first organized by the union. It was then that Negroes first became members of Local 50.

In Local 50, there are 6 Negroes in the total membership of 700. The initiation fee is \$3.00 and the dues \$18.00 yearly or \$1.50 monthly.

Since its organization in May 1935, Local 50 has had but one strike—the Gottfried Bakery Strike of May 20-June 18, 1935, which was called to get union recognition and better working conditions. The Negro members of the Local participated as fellow unionists. "No Negroes scabbed in this strike," reported Mr. Gund, the Secretary-Treasurer. "The truth is that he (Gottfried) used white scabs. He could get plenty of them. I suppose that if he couldn't, he would have gone to Harlem to get some workers to exploit. In spite of that we won the strike and are now getting along fine."

Local 505—Bread and Roll Bakers<sup>102</sup>—Organized in 1930. Its present membership is 1045 of whom none are Negroes. Its initiation fee is \$25.00 payable in terms, and the dues are \$62.40 yearly, payable \$5.20 monthly.

Although by constitution membership is open to any baker who is over 18 years old and who is a citizen of the United States, there never was a Negro member in Local 505. Mr. Kerman, the Secretary, stated, "No Negroes made application for membership. We have organized only bakery shops and factories in the lower East Side of Manhattan. No Negroes worked in these shops. Most of our members are Jews."

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Louis Kerman, Secretary, September 24, 1935.

Local 50579—Cake Bakers<sup>108</sup>—It has never had a Negro member since its organization in 1930. The territorial jurisdiction of this local is also limited to the Lower East Side of Manhattan; therefore, its membership, too, is mainly Jewish. Just as other union officials have done, Mr. Bless, secretary, asserted that no color bar is put up against applicants for membership and that no Negroes worked at the industry in shops over which the local has jurisdiction.

Local 50579 has at present 400 members, none of whom are Negroes. Its initiation fee is \$25.00, payable in installments, and its dues are \$74.00 yearly or \$6.20 monthly.

BAKERY WORKERS, INSIDE, LOCAL 19585 A. F. OF L.<sup>109</sup> This is a federal local organized in 1934, of employees of the National Biscuit Company. It has 3,000 members of whom 2 are Negroes. It should be noted, however, that these 2 Negro members are not regular employees of the company such as bakers, packers, etc. One is a cook for the company plant, and the other is a warehouse hand (porter). Since the constitution of the local specifies that *all* employees of the company had to be included in the union, the two Negro unskilled workers were made regular members of the union. Whether or not the union will have other Negro members who are regular employees depends on the policy of the company in selecting its employees.

BREWERY, FLOUR, CEREAL AND SOFT DRINK WORKERS OF AMERICA,  
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF:

Local 1—Brewers<sup>109</sup>—Organized in 1884. In this union there were any Negro members. "They don't seem to take an interest in it", stated the financial secretary. "It takes a long period of time to learn the trade. There are many Negroes working around the brewers as porters and helpers who could very easily learn, but as I said, they are apparently not interested."

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Mr. Bless, Secretary, September 24, 1935.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with the Secretary (name withheld), July 25, 1935.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Mr. Fred Schwab, Financial Secretary, August 30, 1935.

In the union there are 450 members. A 2½ year apprenticeship is required of beginners. To skilled brewers membership is granted upon the payment of an initiation fee of \$50.00 payable in installments. The dues are \$18.00 yearly.

Local 23 — Beer Drivers <sup>106</sup> — Organized 1884. There are 12 Negroes in the total membership of 400. Initiation fee is \$50 payable in installments and dues are \$18.00 yearly.

Negroes have always been members of the union and have enjoyed the same privileges as the other members. As the work increased or decreased with the seasons, the number of Negro members likewise increased or decreased. Negroes are inactive members not attending the meetings or taking part in any of the activities of the union. However, they pay their dues regularly.

Local 59—Brewery Workmen <sup>107</sup>—Henry Drew, Secretary, remarked, "We positively do not have any Negro members in this union. I've been a member for forty-two years now and never knew of a Negro who applied for membership." In the few years before 1900 and before Drew became a member of the local, it was known as Local Assembly 8390 of the Knights of Labor. Its actual origin was in 1886, but it has been affiliated with the U. B. F. C. & S. D. W. of A. since 1900.

At present the membership of the Local, 300, is just about entirely German and Irish. Mr. Drew asserted, however, that membership was not limited to any one group but by constitution to any citizen of the United States. He said that Negroes have never shown an interest in that kind of work.

The initiation fee is \$52.50 and dues \$24.00 yearly, payable \$2.00 monthly.

#### CIGAR MAKERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF AMERICA:

Local 144—Cigar Makers <sup>208</sup>—Organized in 1879—When the large cigar factories were in the North, many Negroes were

<sup>106</sup> Interview with George Reysen, Financial Secretary, August 30, 1935.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Henry Drew, Secretary, September 12, 1935.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Jack Melhado, Secretary, August 30, 1935.

members. Now, there are very few in the unions. In local 144, which has a total membership of 340, there are 3 Negroes. Special efforts to organize Negro workers and "to instill into their minds that they were equal in every way to the white members" have been made. Negro members, like others, drop out of the union in slack seasons because the initiation fee and dues are so small—the initiation fee being \$3.00 and the dues \$1.00 monthly—that it is easy for the members to get reinstated. The few Negroes in this union are not very active and seldom attend meetings. They hold no offices. The secretary commented, "Negro workers don't take kindly to unions. They don't understand the importance of organizations to them. Their action in strikes when they do not hold out as long as the other workers shows this."

Local 389—Cigar Makers<sup>100</sup>—Organized in 1909. This is a very small local, 100 members made up almost entirely of Porto Ricans and Cubans. Membership is, nevertheless, open to any worker in the cigar making industry. But, because they speak the same language, many of them not being able to speak English, the members of this local found it wise and practical to organize separately. All fees, privileges, wages, working hours, etc. are the same as in their sister Local 144.

EGG INSPECTORS' UNION, LOCAL 11254 A. F. OF L.:<sup>110</sup> This is a very old Federal local organized in 1903 when candles were used to inspect eggs. In all of these years there have never been Negro members. The total membership at present is 425.

Mr. Siegel, the business manager, stated that the Daniel Reeves chain stores of New York employ Negro women as egg handlers. "I wanted to organize them," he said, "but the union did not approve of female workers because it felt that they could not command the wages set by the union. They did not refuse to have them organized because they were Negroes. The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company employs white women egg

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Charles Siegel, Business Manager, October 1, 1935.

candlers and the union refused to let me organize them for the same reason."

**FISH WORKERS INDUSTRIAL UNION, LOCAL 106**<sup>111</sup>—Organized in 1931. Until very recently this local was affiliated with the Food Workers Industrial Union. After its separation from this union it applied for a charter from the Amalgamated Meat Cutters of America. Action on the application by the Amalgamated Meat Cutters is still pending.

Of the 400 members of this union there are 3 Negroes. "I don't think that there are over 35 or 40 Negroes working in the retail shops in New York. At any rate, we have only come across three in the shops we organized," said Mr. Hutt, Organizer. He continued, "We have been making special efforts to organize the Negro workers in retail fish shops in Harlem. To make it easy for them to join we will charge them an initiation fee of 50c and dues of 5c weekly. Most of them work as porters, delivery boys and what-nots as well as at cutting and serving fish." The regular initiation fee is \$5.75 and the dues 15c to 75c varying with the amount of the wages received.

The three members of the union are all in good standing, attend the meetings regularly and are quite active. One of them is the secretary of the district in which he works. Mr. Hutt feels that his union will be able to do a great deal for the Negro workers in the Harlem areas as soon as it gets its new charter. Then it will be more powerful and can make greater demands from the employers.

**FOOD WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION :**

**Local 119—Hotel and Restaurant Workers**<sup>112</sup>—Although Local 119 has been affiliated with the F. W. I. U. only since 1929, it had been in existence long before, since 1912. Then it was a local of the Amalgamated Food Workers and The International Catering Workers. This union soon realized that the Negroes "made an important part of the food industry." The strikes

<sup>111</sup> Interview with R. Hutt, Organizer, September 10, 1935.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with M. Obermier, General Secretary, September 11, 1935.

of 1912, 1918, 1924 and 1929 thoroughly convinced the union "that the Negro workers could not be overlooked." "So we welcomed them into the union and made special efforts to organize them," declared Mr. Obermier, General Secretary. Although these efforts are more recent, Negroes, at least a few, have always been members of the union. At present there are 250 in the total membership of 3,000 in local 119. Of this number the greatest proportion is unskilled. Mr. Obermier distributes them among the various crafts of the industry as follows: dish washers and kitchen helpers—200; waiters, counter-men or bus boys—about 30; chefs and cooks—20. Negro workers are put and kept, it seems, in the work which keeps them away from the public—the customers, except when a shop is exclusively Negro. This system is not "consciously carried out," Mr. Obermier explained. The majority of the Negro workers are in the kitchens when the hotel and restaurants are organized. "Naturally," he said, "they remain on their same jobs." Although the initiation fees, \$4.00 for skilled workers—waiters, counter-men, chefs—and \$2.00 for unskilled workers—bus boys, dishwashers, kitchen helpers, and dues, 15c to 35c weekly, 2c for the unemployed, vary according to the degree of skill, all members have the same privileges and rights.

As further evidence of the "brotherly spirit of mutual aid and equality," Mr. Obermier made mention of the Negro officers of the local—vice-president, two Executive Board members and two shop chairmen.

In all of the strikes of Local 119—in 1934, '29, '24, '18 and '12, Negroes participated. Those who were members of the union walked out as fellow unionists, but unorganized Negroes worked as strike breakers. As a result of this activity the "union was made to realize that it had to consider the Negro worker"; consequently, it began making special efforts to organize all Negro workers whom it encounters.

Local 134—Butchers, Poultry Handlers and Meat Cutters<sup>113</sup>—Organized in 1934. The parent of this local was "the pioneer

<sup>113</sup> Interview with J. Schein, Organizer, August 5, 1935.

in the battle against discrimination of Negro workers and union men." This local makes no difference as to who shall be members, as long as they are competent workers. Negroes are granted full privileges of membership and have under such conditions been good members since the origin of the union. As to the organization of Negro workers, the union, yet young and poorly financed, has to use the shop chairmen as organizers; therefore, "our three Harlem shop-chairmen contact and propose Negro workers for membership." The Negro section chairman (Harlem section) serves also in this capacity. This is not a special method for Negroes as shop-chairman in other areas do the same thing. In fact, no special effort is made to get Negro membership although great interest is shown.

There are always little strikes in one or a few small shops. In one case a strike was ordered on account of discrimination against a Negro employee, a member of this local. The strike lasted for two weeks in early July, 1935. The worker was reinstated and received an increase of \$9.00 in salary, from \$31.00 to \$40.00 per week. "As yet, we cannot put Negroes in all-white neighborhoods because we are not strong enough; but it is my hope that we will be able to put Negroes in any shop and say to the employer, 'These are the union men we send to your shop' and the employer will not be able to say, 'We don't want that fellow because he is a Negro'."

**HOTEL AND RESTAURANT EMPLOYEES' INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE  
AND BARTENDERS' INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE OF AMERICA:**

Local 16 — Restaurant Employees and Bartenders <sup>214</sup> — Organized in 1925. The members of this local are employees of hotels and restaurants located in the downtown section along Broadway. In 1933, being inspired by the chances N.R.A. gave workers to organize, this group put on an extensive organizational drive. At that time, Negroes became members because they were employed in the restaurants and hotels when they were organized. "Our membership is open to any culinary worker who is a citizen of the United States, and we look upon

<sup>214</sup> Interview with Aladar Retek, General Organizer, August 29, 1935.

Negroes as citizens and not as Negro workers." There are 10 Negroes in this local of 3000 members. All of these are chefs. Among the other types of workers are waiters, bus-boys, bartenders and miscellaneous kitchen help. Mr. Retek, general organizer also stated that these Negro members are "fairly good union men," meaning that they pay their dues regularly and on several occasions have walked off the jobs when the union called individual strikes for improvement of working conditions. "Our workers get along well together." Of course, there are no Negro officers yet, but I feel that as time passes and as they become more active, they will get positions as officers in the union."

Local 89—Cooks and Kitchen Workers<sup>218</sup>—Organized in 1935. The local has 400 members, ten of whom are Negroes. It set up an initiation fee of \$10.50 for cooks and \$5.50 for kitchen helpers: the dues are \$36.00 yearly for cooks and \$18.00 for kitchen helpers. Practically all of the Negro members are kitchen workers and helpers, porters, vegetable cleaners, etc. They gained admittance to the union when the establishments in which they worked were organized, as it is the policy of the local to organize all workers encountered in any given hotel or restaurant. They are full-fledged union members.

"It is definitely stated in our Constitution that there is to be no discrimination on account of color, creed, race, religion or anything else," stated Mr. Garriga, representative. "We take all the workers we find at a restaurant or hotel into our union. Of course, you say that there are no Negro officers. That's because of the small number of Negro members. Also, to protect ourselves against agitators and troublemakers, we require that candidates for offices should have kept one year's continuous membership and given one year's service as an Executive Board member." (The officers referred to in this last statement were those of president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer.)

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Miguel Garriga, Representative, September 11, 1935.



Local 89 has had a few individual shop strikes since its organization in 1935. In these the Negro workers involved quit work when the other members did. No Negroes worked as strike breakers.

Local 219—Waiters<sup>118</sup>—Organized in 1912. The membership of this local is entirely Hungarian and German, explained by the reason that in the geographical area, Yorkville and East Harlem, over which this local has jurisdiction there are no restaurants which hire Negro waiters. The membership is made up of only those who work in these restaurants in that area. The membership is 270.

MEAT CUTTER AND BUTCHER WORKMEN OF NORTH AMERICA,  
AMALGAMATED:

Local 174—Butchers<sup>117</sup>—Organized in 1900. Although there are no Negroes in this local now, there were about 10 during the years 1919, 1920 and 1921. The local lost the shops in which these Negroes were working and, consequently, the Negro membership was lost because of the lack of employment. In these years, the membership of the local was between 800 and 900; now it is 450. As pointed out above, the Negroes who were members entered the local not by direct application but by being employed in a shop which was organized by the local.

Local 234—Butchers<sup>118</sup>—This local is divided into three sub-units, (1) the Kosher Workers, (2) the Non-Kosher Workers and (3) the Delivery Clerks. The membership of the Kosher Workers, 800, is all Jewish. This is the case, of course, because that trade, due to its religious nature, automatically limits its membership to Jews. "The people (Jewish) want Kosher killed meat handled by and sold by Jews only," Mr. Belsky, secretary, explained. "In this case we have no control over the membership." The Non-Kosher Workers' unit, organized just three months ago, May, 1935, has one Negro member. Mr.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Gernard Kahn, Secretary, August 28, 1935.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Alex Drefke, Secretary, August 30, 1935.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Joseph Belsky, Secretary, August 5, 1935.

Blesky stated that he expects that many more Negro workers will apply for membership when the union becomes known. Since his experience with Negro workers has been exceedingly limited, he felt that he is not in a position to speak with any degree of validity on the problem of Negroes in unions or in his local. This one member has been with this section since it was organized. The third unit, the Delivery Clerks, has a total membership of 200, 6 of whom are Negroes. The short life of these newly added units in which Negroes are full members has allowed little experience with Negro workers. A note should be made about a strike held by the Non-Kosher Workers. The one Negro member of this section was transferred to a Westchester market. The employer did not want him; however, a one-day protest strike by that section of the local changed the employer's mind.

Local 662—Salesman and Poultry Workers<sup>128</sup>—Organized in 1931. This is another case where workers must be able to handle kosher-killed poultry. Also, because all of the purchasers of this meat are Jews, it is necessary for the workers to be able to speak the Hebrew language. On these scores Negroes do not qualify for membership; therefore, among the 500 members of this local there are no Negroes.

MEAT CUTTERS UNION (Local 134)<sup>129</sup>—This independent union which seceded from the Food Workers' Industrial Union was organized separately in 1934. Negroes have been members of this local for about seven months, first joining in February, 1935. There are 20 in the total membership of 250. Most of these are employed in the meat shops along 8th Avenue between 114th and 145th Streets. "We became interested in the Negro problem and started to organize the shops in which they work along 8th Avenue. So far we have 20 Negro members. For them the union has obtained an increase of from 15% to 30% in wages and a cut of 35 hours a week in their weekly working hours," remarked the secretary. He explained further that be-

<sup>128</sup> Interview with I. Rand, Secretary-Treasurer, July 30, 1935.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Conrad Kaye, Secretary, September 10, 1935.

fore the union became active, the Negro worker had to work about 85 hours a week and then remain in the stores after closing hours to clean them. Also, they now get 13 holidays per year with pay. All hiring and firing is done through the union after two weeks' notice to the worker. The employer must furnish a good reason (inefficiency, drunkenness, etc.) to the Executive Board of the union before any action is taken against the worker.

There are no Negro officers of the union; however, there is a Negro district chairman. He is to work along with the white organizer in organizing the other Negro workers in the meat industry in the Harlem area. To become eligible to hold an office a member must have been in good standing for at least six months before election. There are no Negro officers because none were in the union for six months when the election was held three months ago.

RESTAURANT, CAFETERIA AND CULINARY EMPLOYEES<sup>122</sup> — Affiliated with the American Labor Alliance as Local 1—Organized in 1934 and composed of 1700 members of whom none are Negroes. It has had no experience with Negro members or Negro workers as it has not yet organized a cafeteria or restaurant in which Negroes were working and, therefore, has had no occasion to contact Negro workers. No Negroes have applied for membership.

SEA FOOD WORKERS, UNITED, LOCAL 16975 A. F. OF L.:<sup>123</sup>— Organized in 1919. The New York Local 16975 still has 5 Negro members, 2 luggers and 3 fish cleaners. Its total membership is 650. "One of our colored members," said Mr. Skillen, President, "is a 100% fish cleaner and a 100% union member." Further remarks showed that by a "100% union man" Mr. Skillen meant one who paid his dues, came to meetings sometimes and worked hard at all times. All of the Negro members are "full members," but there are no Negro officers.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with James J. Ryan, President, August 12, 1935.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Charles F. Skillen, President, September 26, 1935.

## PAPER MANUFACTURING, PRINTING AND PUBLISHING

## BOOKBINDERS, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF:

Local 9—Paper Rulers<sup>128</sup>—Organized in 1900. Because of the great use of machinery to rule paper now, the membership of this local has dwindled to hardly enough to maintain a local. At present the local has 30 members. Those who are members are "old timers", and there are no Negroes among them. In fact, there never were Negro members in Local #9.

Local 25—Bookbinders.<sup>129</sup>—The two Negro members of this local are among its oldest, both having been members for about thirty years. One of them, now employed at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, joined the union through a direct application to the local headquarters, while the other, now employed at Tapley's on Court Square, Long Island City, joined when a group of shop workers were organized. Neither of these men hold any office at present, but one has been a member of the Executive Board and also a shop chairman.

Local Number 25 was organized in 1890. It has at present 385 members, two of whom are Negroes. For membership an apprenticeship of four years is required if the applicant is not a journeyman bookbinder. Initiation fee is twenty-five dollars, payable in installments, and dues are \$36 yearly, payable \$3 monthly.

Local 43—Bindery Women<sup>128</sup>—Organized in 1895 and composed of 500 members, one of whom is a Negro woman. Twenty-five years ago the local organized Tiebel Brothers in Brooklyn. There were two Negro women, sisters, employed there at the time. Both became members of the union, but since then one died. The other is still employed at Tiebel Brothers. She is elderly now and, therefore, does not attend meetings. She held no office in the union in spite of her long term of membership and seniority over many other members.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with M. McGrady, Representative, September 20, 1935.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with M. McGrady, Secretary, September 20, 1935.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Mary J. Murphy, President & Organizer, September 20, 1935.

Local 66—Bindery Women <sup>126</sup>—In local 66, which was organized in June, 1931, there are 170 members, none of whom are Negroes. For membership there is required an apprenticeship of 2 years for beginners; an initiation fee of \$10.00. The dues are \$18.00 yearly, \$1.50 monthly. Membership is by constitution open to any female worker in any branch of the book-binding trade. The local has made no effort to organize any Negro bookbinders because it has never come in contact with Negro workers and "never had occasion to consider organization of the Negro worker."

LITHOGRAPHERS OF AMERICA, AMALGAMATED:—Local 1—Lithographers <sup>126a</sup>—organized in 1884 and composed of 2,600 members of whom two are Negroes. The secretary of this local reported that the two Negro members joined in 1920 when they applied for membership—the first Negroes ever to apply or to be encountered by the local. Since 1920 both of these Negro members have been very live workers, taking active parts in the business and social meetings. Neither has held or is holding an office in the union, but both enjoy the usual privileges of membership.

PHOTO-ENGRAVERS' UNION OF NORTH AMERICA, INTERNATIONAL:—Local 1—Photo-Engravers.<sup>127</sup>—This local has five "very excellent" Negro members, entering with the expansion of the photo and gravure work just after the War began. Since then one or two other shops employing Negroes have been organized. Some of the Negro workers who joined the union discontinued their memberships as they changed to other types of work. Others stuck with the union. At present there are 5 Negroes in the 2,400 members of Local #1.

Beginners in this type of work must serve an apprenticeship of 5 years. Journeymen workers may join the union upon payment of an initiation fee of \$50.00. The dues are \$39.00 yearly and \$3.35 monthly.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Catherine Harrington, Secretary, September 10, 1935.

<sup>126a</sup> Interview with Albert E. Castro, Secretary, July 25, 1935.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Edward White, President, September 20, 1935.

The president praised highly the quality of the work of the Negro members; however, he complained that they do not attend meetings regularly. Although Negroes are full members in every respect and have held such a status since 1921, there are no Negro officers.

**PRINTING PRESSMEN'S AND ASSISTANTS' UNION OF NORTH AMERICA, INTERNATIONAL:**

Local 1—Paper Handlers and Sheet Straighteners<sup>128</sup>—Organized in 1903. When the membership of Local #1 was about 1,000 in good times before machinery was used so extensively to straighten out and fold large sheets of paper, there were about 100 Negro members. With the greater use of machinery came a great decrease in need for man power and skill; thus, the membership dropped because of the lack of work. At present, Local #1 has 650 members, 25 of whom are Negroes.

The local reported one experience with discrimination against a Negro worker. A Negro member—"about as black as coal"—was sent on a job. The foreman refused to accept him and finally admitted that the only reason for his action was that the worker was a Negro. Then, the local called a shop strike. Now the foreman and this Negro worker are actually good friends.

The union is at present engaged in some organization work in a shop in which six Negroes and one Italian are working. Through such means as this, organization of all workers in shops, most of the Negro members have joined the local. They do not usually object to union membership, and when they do join, they become "the best members." Although Negroes have been full members of the local since its organization, no Negroes are now officers. In fact, to the best knowledge of the officers interviewed, Negroes have never held offices in the local.

Local 51—New York Printing Pressmen<sup>129</sup>—Organized in 1898 and composed of 300 members of whom 6 are Negroes. In the past 20 years there have been a few Negro members of

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Thomas P. Gill, Secretary, September 20, 1935.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with the Secretary (name withheld), July 29, 1935.

this local. At present there are only six Negroes employed in the union printing shops of the city. These are the members of Local 51. As members, they are somewhat active. From time to time two or three have served on committees, but none have held executive offices. Outside of the union headquarters some have served as shop chairmen. One official of the union described them as "ideal members in every way."

For the past few years the union has been attempting to organize the Negro owned and operated printing shops in Harlem where the majority of the Negro printers work. These efforts have been quite unsuccessful because the volume of business carried on by these shops could not support the employment of union pressmen and compositors.

In recent strikes sponsored by the local Negro members have all cooperated as other-workers.

**STEREOTYPERS' AND ELECTROTYPERS' UNION OF NORTH AMERICA, INTERNATIONAL:** In Manhattan there are two divisions of this union, Local 100—New York Electrotypers and the New York Stereotypers. Local 100<sup>180</sup> has two Negro members, one a journeymen electrotypist and the other an apprentice, both employed at the National Electrotype Company. The journeymen has been a member for about 29 years while the apprentice is just doing his fifth and final years of his term of apprenticeship. The union has had no other experience with Negro workers because "none besides those two applied for membership."

Since its origin in 1888 Local 100 has been involved in but one labor dispute—a lockout in 1906. In it, the one Negro member at the time participated as a fellow unionist.

The New York Stereotypers<sup>181</sup> merely reported that its constitution has a "policy conservative" in regard to Negro members, that it had one Negro member in its total of 1,184 and that this "Negro member [is] a loyal one."

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Joseph A. Carroll, President, September 20, 1935.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with the President (name withheld), October 5, 1935.

## TYPOGRAPHICAL UNION, INTERNATIONAL:

Local 6—Typographical Workers<sup>182</sup>—This is the oldest and most powerful local in the printing industry in New York City. Organized in 1850, it has today 9,621 members of whom 25 are Negroes. Its records show that Negroes first joined fifty years ago in 1885. From that time there have always been a few, 25 representing the greatest number of all times. Like other locals, this one makes it a policy to accept all members in a shop, "providing that they are thoroughly competent," when it organizes it. Similarly, through this means Negroes gained membership. After becoming members, though, they have never advanced or been allowed to advance, as the case might be, to executive positions. On the other hand, they do serve as shop chairmen and committee members. On the whole, they are passive members in this Local.

Local 6A—Mailers' Union<sup>183</sup>—In this forty year old union, having a membership of 845, there is one Negro who is now employed at the World-Telegram Newspaper Company. He became a member of the union in 1923 through an application submitted at that time. "Then," stated Mr. O'Hara, business representative, "there was a shortage of men for the work we were handling, so we put aside the five-year apprenticeship requirement and took in inexperienced men. That's when Antenez joined." The work of this union consists of packing and preparing for shipment and mailing periodicals, newspapers, magazines, etc. As far as he can judge from records, the one worker named above has been the only Negro to apply for membership in the union. Although Antenez is a full member, getting union wages and working union hours, he is not very active in the organization. He pays his dues regularly and attends meetings seldom; he holds no office in the local. Said Mr. O'Hara, "He is so docile and quiet that one would never know he was in the union."

<sup>182</sup> Interview with L. H. Rouse, President, July 29, 1935.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Gran O'Hara, Business Representative, August 20, 1935.



Local 83 — Hebrew-American Typographical Workers<sup>184</sup> — Hyman Bloom, President, explained that the membership of this local is entirely Hebrew. "Our work", he said "is to set type by hand and by linotype machine for Jewish newspapers and commercial advertisements. A member must know Hebrew, Yiddish and English. This is a linguistic union and I doubt if any Negro or other groups, too, could qualify for membership."

#### AMUSEMENTS AND PROFESSIONS

**ACTORS AND ARTISTS OF AMERICA, ASSOCIATED:** There are two affiliated organizations of this association in New York, the Actors' Equity Association<sup>185</sup> and the Hebrew Actors Union, Inc.<sup>186</sup> The former reported that 8 percent of its 3,500 members is Negro. Expressed in the statement, "We accept as members those [Negroes] who play in white companies, but we do not attempt to organize the average Negro company," is the policy of the union in regard to the membership and organization of Negro actors and artists. The latter is a union whose membership is by constitution limited to Jewish performers; therefore, it has no Negro members.

**MOTION PICTURE OPERATORS' UNION, ALLIED:**<sup>187</sup> This is an independent union not affiliated with the A. F. of L. Organized in 1933, it has a total membership of 300, of whom 7 are Negroes. The initiation fee is \$300.00 and dues 5% of earnings weekly. No organizers are sent out to recruit members: the person desiring membership must of his own initiative go to the office of the union and make application. No down payment is required with the application. The applicants' names are put on a list, and when there is a call to the union for operators, the top man is selected and sent on the job. At that time he pays one half of the initiation fee (\$150.00). When he

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Hyman Bloom, President, September 24, 1935.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with the President (name withheld), September 10, 1935.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with the President, Jean Greenfield, September 10, 1935.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Benjamin F. De Agastina, President, September 11, 1935.

has been on the job long enough to prove his competency as an operator, he pays the other half of the fee or signs a note for installments and then goes through the initiatory ritual. Then, he maintains weekly dues of 5% of his earnings. No Negroes have joined through this procedure. All are charter members.

There is one Negro member on the Executive Board of 14 members. The president of the union remarked, "We confine our colored members to Harlem and the Bronx because that's where they live and that's where they get along better. You can take it from me there is no animosity among us because of color or race. All the members are equal in power : all get along o. k."

**SOUND AND PROJECTION ENGINEERS, UNITED:**<sup>188</sup> In this small, recently organized — 1932 — independent union, not affiliated with the A. F. of L., there are no Negro members. Qualifications for membership are: (1) being a sound and projection engineer, (2) being able to pay an initiation fee of \$75—one-third down and balance in installments, and (3) being able to maintain yearly dues of \$60, payable \$5 monthly. There was at one time one Negro member. He has changed his affiliation to the Allied Motion Picture Operators Union. Apart from him the union has had no experience with Negro workers.

**STAGE EMPLOYEES AND MOTION PICTURE MACHINE OPERATORS  
OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA, INTERNATIONAL  
ALLIANCE OF:**

**Local 52—Motion Picture Studio Mechanics.**<sup>189</sup> This has 388 white members and 1 Negro. Until recently, there were 2 Negro members, but one dropped out on account of old age and general inability to work. The present member is employed at the Eastern Service Studio. At one time, he was one of the union's head property men. The initiation fee is at present \$250.00, which must be paid in one sum before membership is granted. The yearly dues are \$30.00, payable \$2.50 monthly.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Mr. O'Sullivan, Representative, August 26, 1935.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Mr. Delaney, Secretary, August 21, 1935.

Local 669—Film Technicians<sup>140</sup>—At present this union has no Negroes in its membership of 380. There was one Negro who joined in 1929 at the inception of the local, but he dropped out in 1930 without stating reasons. He could not be located at a later date.

**THEATRICAL FEDERATED UNION, NATIONAL:**<sup>141</sup> There are no Negro members in this union of 300 stage hands, musicians and motion picture machine operators. This is an independent union not affiliated with the A. F. of L. Although there are no Negroes members at present, there were a few between 1933 and 1934. These have changed their affiliation to either Local 306 of the I. A. T. S. E. or the Allied Motion Picture Operators Union.

**THEATRICAL WARDROBE ATTENDANTS, LOCAL 16770 A. F. OF L.:**<sup>142</sup> Miss Ocker states that when the local was affiliated with the A. F. of L. in 1919, there were about five Negro members "who were working in the theatres when we organized." Gradually all of these members have dropped out of the union without giving any definite reason for so doing, but Miss Ocker believes that "they weren't exactly interested in the union." At present the total membership is 308.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE

**FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES, NATIONAL:**<sup>143</sup> Local 4—Organized in 1916, Local #4 has at present a total membership of about 1,000. It was impossible to even estimate the Negro membership because positively no record of racial identity is kept on the records. However, there might be as high as one-fifth Negroes in the membership. The general organizer remarked, "Negroes are not usually good union members. They are not union or not organizational conscious. If any of them

<sup>140</sup> Interview with S. Harrison, Secretary, August 21, 1935.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Rudolph Kramer, Business Agent, August 26, 1935.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Miss A. Ocker, Business Agent, August 23, 1935.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with John D. Cloud, General Organizer, October 4, 1934.

who are Federal employees are not members of the union, it's their own fault because we would be glad to have them come in." There is no separation in the North, but in the South there are separate locals. Local #4 of New York is a mixed local. It has a Negro Executive Board member, a laborer in the Customs House. Most of the other Negro members are unskilled workers — hospital attendants, kitchen helpers, charwomen, porters, laborers, etc.

POST OFFICE CLERKS, NATIONAL FEDERATION: Local 10—New York Post Office Clerks.<sup>144</sup> Organized in 1910, Local #10 has grown in membership to the present number of 3,000 of whom 500 are Negroes. As always, it charges no initiation fee: dues are \$26.00 yearly, payable 50c monthly. In order to qualify for the sick and death benefit, which is optional, the members must pay an additional 50c monthly. Negroes have been members of Local #10 "from its very inception." All are, of course, full fledged members. At present, the vice-president of the local is a Negro. There are six Negro delegates, all of whom are also members of the Executive Board.

"Our Negro members, especially those at the General Post Office, are intelligent boys," said Mr. Harris, Chairman of Legislative and Publicity Committee. "They are intelligent but not organization conscious. They are so concerned with the color question that they overlook such vital issues. That is true about other members, too, but it's more noticeable with our colored boys."

POSTAL WORKERS OF AMERICA: Local 9—New York Postal Workers.<sup>145</sup> "Our union believes in industrial unionism, so that all workers are given a chance. I guess the A. F. of L. will not issue us a charter because this is one of our fundamental principles." Thus spoke the National Organizer of this Union. The union and all of its locals are organized along industrial

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Mr. Harris, Chairman of Legislative and Publicity Committee, October 27, 1935.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with R. Fishbein, National Organizer, October 27, 1935.

lines. They include every worker who has anything to do with postal work—clerks, carriers, laborers, drivers, and charwomen. All charwomen are Negroes—about 25—and one of them is vice-president of the local. "We didn't elect her officer because of color. She merited it". In addition to the Negro officer as vice-president, Local #9 has five Negro delegates who also serve as organizers for the workers. Negro members are on the whole active and interested.

Local #9 has 1,200 members, 350 of whom are Negroes. It charges no initiation fee; dues are \$3.00 yearly for workers earning more than \$1,000 yearly and \$1.20 for workers earning less than \$1,000. "That gives the charwomen and laborers a fairer break because they earn less than \$1,000 a year." Most of the Negro male members are clerks. Few of the drivers belong to this union.

**SANITARY CHAUFFEURS AND DRIVERS PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION:**<sup>146</sup> Negroes have been members since the inception of the union in 1918—many of them being charter members. Some have held offices, none executive offices, however. There are at present two Negro delegates. Others in official positions have been two trustees.

**TEACHERS, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF:** Local 5<sup>147</sup>—New York Federation of Teachers. For the past four years a group in Local #5 which disfavored the program and policies of the Local—criticizing its offices as being too conservative and criticizing their failure to take definite stands on certain issues—continuously heckled and antagonized these officers through firm opposition to the programs of the Local. This activity resulted in the resignation of these officers who also withdrew from the Local #5 along with many who agreed with them and organized a new body known as the Teachers Guild, which is not at present with the A. F. of L. This final break occurred during September of 1935. Shortly afterward, Local

<sup>146</sup> Interview with A. Kassof, President, November 6, 1935.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with the Secretary (name withheld), November 2, 1935.

#5, then controlled by this "more radical group" called a meeting to be held at Wadleigh High School in the Harlem area. At this meeting the conditions under which the teachers and students of Harlem worked were deplored—factual informations on such conditions having been obtained from the Preliminary Report of the Sub-Committee on Education of The Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem. As a result, it appointed a Committee on Harlem Conditions composed of the teachers who work in the Harlem area. At this time the Committee has not yet had an opportunity to meet and formulate a definite program.

The membership of this reorganized body is 2,100, "a small number" of whom are Negroes—the actual number not being determined because of no records by racial groups. Except for those on the Committee on Harlem Conditions no Negroes hold any offices in the local.

**UTILITY EMPLOYEES OF AMERICA, BROTHERHOOD OF:** Local 100—Equity Local. The secretary of this local reported as follows:

"The Brotherhood of Utility Employees is a national industrial union, not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Equity Local 100 has jurisdiction over the employees of the New York Edison, Inc., and the Consolidated Gas Company of New York. Membership is open to all employees, regardless of race, color, creed, political beliefs, etc., but at the present time we regret to say that none of the Negro employees of the above mentioned companies are members of this local."<sup>148</sup>

#### MENTAL AND MACHINERY INDUSTRIES

**ELECTROPLATERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION:** Local 26—Electroplaters<sup>149</sup>—Until 1933 when it affiliated with E. I. U., the Electroplaters' Union was an independent organization, organized in 1903 and set up along lines of industrial unionism until 1933. For the past twenty years the union has always had at least 3 or 4 Negro members. At present there are 6 Negroes, 2 helpers and 4 journeymen, in the total membership of 248.

<sup>148</sup> Correspondence with P. B. Ewing, Secretary, September 20, 1935.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Fred Brenner, Business Agent, October 29, 1935.

The local is attempting to organize "the biggest shop in New York" in which about 40 Negroes, the majority of the workers, are employed. "It will be a great thing, especially for our Negro membership, if we succeed on that job," remarked the Business Agent. Negro members are somewhat active—attending meetings, participating in discussions, etc., but, nevertheless, there are no Negro officers or committeemen in the local.

ENGINEERS, INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING:

Local 3—Marine Engineers—organized in 1934.<sup>180</sup> It has at present 600 members, 20 of whom are Negroes. Membership in this local is limited to licensed engineers, a Federal license being required for workers on self-propelled vessels and a City license for workers on non-self-propelled vessels. Before one can take the examination for the license of a third assistant engineer, the lowest rank of engineers, he must have served an apprenticeship of three years and before he can take the examination for a license of chief engineer, he must have served an apprenticeship of seven years. There have been Negro members since the inception of the local. A number of them hold licenses for chief engineer, but none of them work as chief engineers except on a vessel where there is but one engineer—and he is the chief, the assistant, the firemen and everything else. There are no Negro chief engineers on ocean-going steamers. There are no Negro officers of Local 3.

Local 30—Operating Engineers.<sup>181</sup> Local 30 has had very little experience with Negro workers. There seems to be very few colored licensed engineers in New York. From time to time, however, the Local has encountered one or two here and there as it organized shops. There are 10 Negroes in the membership of 1400. The main requirement for membership is that one be an engineer licensed by the City of New York. On jobs where many men are working together the Negroes and whites

<sup>180</sup> Interview with William Gallagher, President, September 26, 1935.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Mr. Daly, Secretary, September 17, 1935.

get along in a very friendly manner. The Negroes are practically all hoisting engineers.

**Local 125—Portable and Hoister Engineers**<sup>183</sup>—Organized in 1896 and composed of 491 members—12 Negroes. Requirements in this union for membership are hard to satisfy. In the first place, one must be a licensed engineer—the license being granted by the City. Then, two members of the union must recommend the applicant who must have five years of experience and must be able to pay \$100.00 initiation fee within 90 days. These requirements account for the small membership, both Negro and white. The Negro workers are all full-fledged members who are somewhat active in the union. They attend meetings from time to time and pay their dues regularly. Among the Negro members there are no officers, and as far as the records show, there have never been Negro officers of any kind.

**FIREMEN AND OILERS, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF: Local 56—Firemen and Oilers**<sup>184</sup>—Organized in 1896. Most of the Negro members of this local are employed as firemen in the coal yards. There they were working usually, when they joined the union. In Local 56 there are about 25 Negroes in the total membership of 1,000. The initiation fee is \$25.00, and the dues are \$21.00 yearly, both of which are payable in installment. Negroes have always been members of the union, but not in "large numbers" as at the present. There are no Negro officers. "They are not active enough or interested enough to become officers. And, too, their membership is so small that they could not really elect an officer." These remarks were made by the secretary.

**METAL AND ALLIED UNIONS, FEDERATION OF: Parent of two New York Locals. Local 302—Silver and Metal Fabricated Workers**<sup>184</sup>—"In our union, which is not affiliated with the

<sup>183</sup> Interview with John T. Irwin, Secretary, August 12, 1935.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Mr. Shanley, Secretary, September 9, 1935.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with James Lustig, New York District Organizer of the Federation of Metal and Allied Unions, August 6, 1935.



A. F. of L., it is quite different. We make special efforts to see that the Negro is given a fair break because we know that he is usually discriminated against." Negroes have recently been made members of this local (early 1935), although the local has been in existence since 1931. Until early 1935, no shops having Negro workers had been organized by the union.

In 1935, at present, a strike is being held at the United Wire Goods Company at 420 East 106 Street. Here Negroes who are members of the local are loyal and are participating as fellow-unionists. On the other hand, Negroes in the company who do not belong to the union are sticking together against the unionization of the company shop. "Most of these Negroes do not understand the advantages of trade unionism. They are from the South and still feel distrustful towards us. If we could only prove our genuine attitude, we could win the strike."

Local 303—Metal Novelty Workers<sup>156</sup>—This newly organized local, not affiliated with the A. F. of L., has had Negro members since its beginning in 1933. Both the total membership and the Negro membership have increased to the present standing of 1000 and 75, respectively. Special appeals are made to Negro workers to join the union. Many times Negro organizers of other union are used to give talks to the prospective members. When they are organized, every possible effort is made to encourage their attending and participating in the meetings. There are several Negroes on the Executive Board of the Local and there is one Negro Department Chairlady. Because the Negroes are in great minority, it is significant that they hold offices in the local. "On the whole, I am proud of my experience with Negro workers. I emphasize equality of working conditions and wages and see to it that Negroes are treated like all other workers."

METAL WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, SHEET:

Local 137—Sheet Metal Workers<sup>156</sup>—In 1933 this local organized a shop in which three colored men worked. They were

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Mr. Rosen, Secretary, September 30, 1935.

specialists in ash-can making and had worked in the factory for about six months. With the other workers they joined the union but dropped out about three months later. They had not even finished paying their initiation fees.

Local 137, organized in 1912, has at present 450 members, none of whom are Negroes. The initiation fee ranges from \$62.50 to \$160.00 according to the craft, and the dues vary from \$42.00 to \$60.00 yearly according to the amount of wages of the member. Initiation fee is payable \$50 down and \$10.00 monthly for those having to pay \$160.00 and \$25.00 down and \$5.00 monthly for those having to pay \$62.50, dues are payable monthly.

POLISHERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION, METAL: Local 8—Metal Polishers<sup>187</sup>—Although Local #8 was organized in 1885, it did not begin to take in Negro members until 1933 when it, stimulated by N.R.A., promoted an intensive organizational campaign by organizing all workers in metal polishing shops in New York City. During this campaign six Negro workers were made members of the union. All six are still employed under better working conditions of wages and hours. Before that time no Negro metal polishers had ever been encountered by the organizers of Local #8, and none ever applied for membership.

SPINNERS OF NEW YORK, METAL<sup>188</sup>—Most of the workers here are Jews. In 1931 a Negro metal spinner from South America came to New York and immediately became a member of this union. Shortly afterward, though, he became very sick. The fellow unionists picked up a big additional collection of \$75 to help him go home. Last year, they wrote to him and asked him to come back because they had a job for him; he answered and said that he preferred to remain in South America because of his sickness. Thus was the account of the union's only experience with a Negro member. This union is independent—

<sup>187</sup> Interview with George Jacobs, Executive Board Member, October 4, 1935.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with John Caruso, President, October 22, 1935.

not affiliated with the A. F. of L. It was organized in 1897. Its present membership is 255.

#### LEATHER INDUSTRIES

**LEATHER WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED: Local 48—Suitcase, Bag and Portfolio Makers**<sup>190</sup>—This local too, requires an exceptionally long apprenticeship—6 to 7 years. Most of the Negro members served their terms of apprenticeship while working about the shops as helpers, floor men, shipping clerks, etc. When the shops were organized, they were taken into union apprenticeships and finally into full membership. The Negro members take active parts in all meetings and activities of the union. "And as workers you can't find any better ones anywhere. They are among the best element."

This union is now out on a general strike (8/8/35) in all shops in New York City. All of the Negro members were at that time on picket duty. It seems unusual that the 36 Negro members of the 1,200 members should be on picket duty at the same time. In the many other general strikes and the continuous shop stoppages, Negroes have "worked very well indeed. They are faithful and fight it out to the end." The union has no definite or separate plan or program regarding its Negro membership. Such is not necessary since "all get along like brothers."

**SHOE AND LEATHER WORKERS' UNION, UNITED: District 23—New York Workers**<sup>190</sup>—Organized in 1933 and composed of 3,000 members of whom 30 are Negroes. This union, an independent organization not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, declared that its program is "one and the same" for all workers and that to it Negroes were "just workers." In fact, its extremely "liberal policy" has caused it to be looked upon as a left-wing organization. In one of its departments, the Repairing Department, Negro members are of particular prominence. Although the majority of members of this depart-

<sup>190</sup> Interview with Mr. Risenberg, Organizer, August 8, 1935.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with Mr. Rosenberg, Secretary, July 29, 1935.

ment are not Negroes, its chairman is a Negro and several of its Executive Board Members are Negroes. This department is "almost completely run" by Negroes.

#### MISCELLANEOUS UNIONS

**BILL POSTERS AND BILLERS OF AMERICA, INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF: Local 2**—Bill Posters<sup>161</sup>—Organized in 1896 and composed of 300 members—no negroes. Records show that this union has never had Negro members and that Negroes have never sent in application for membership. Also, they show that the initiation fee is \$500, payable \$250 with application and \$250 at time of initiation.

**BILL POSTERS AND USHERS, JEWISH:**<sup>162</sup> The membership of this union is limited to Jews because back in 1890 the union was organized for those workers who could speak only the Hebrew language. There are in the union 95 members.

**BOOKKEEPERS, STENOGRAPHERS AND ACCOUNTANTS, Local 12646 A. F. of L.:**<sup>163</sup> Leo Rosenblum, organizer, remarked, "We are very much concerned about our Negro members and about Negro workers in this field. As organizer I am making every possible effort to interest our Negro workers in taking a greater part in the union's work and to interest those who are not members to join. I take this attitude because I realize that in office work, Negroes are discriminated against more than in any other kind of employment."

Before full qualification for membership is reached, the applicant or not fully qualified member must have completed two years of experience, either with union or in some other reputable organization. All fifteen of the Negro members have met that requirement and are, therefore, receiving union-scale pay and working union-standard time where it prevails. Two of them are staff-chairladies in the offices where they work.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Mr. Lyon, Representative, September 16, 1935.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Office Record Keeper (name withheld), September 10, 1935.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Leo Rosenblum, Organizer, August 7, 1935.

In addition to getting Negro members from the shops organized, recommendations of persons by the Harlem Labor Committee are accepted. This local sent Mr. Rosenblum and a Negro member to the recent Negro Labor Conference of July 20, 1935.

**CLEANERS', DYERS' AND PRESSERS' UNION, Local 18232 A. F. of L.:**<sup>164</sup>—Organized in 1914, this local reported that "Negro members from 1914 to 1933 always received wages equal to white members. Since then the employers use them to cut wage standards, but there is no discrimination in the local against them." At the present it has 125 Negro members in the total of 600. Negroes still enjoy "equal rights and privileges" and serve as shop chairmen in several union shops.

**CLERKS' INTERNATIONAL PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION, RETAIL:**

**Local 743—Hardware, House Furnishing & Plumbing Clerks**<sup>165</sup>—In this very small local of 65 members there is one Negro, and he is not a clerk—but a driver. There were two clerks in a Harlem store at one time, but they dropped out of the union when they quit the jobs.

The initiation fee is \$14.70, and the dues are \$36.00, payable \$3 monthly. These have been the fees since the inception of the local in October, 1933.

The present member joined the local when the shop in which he worked was organized. So did the Negro ex-members. He has been somewhat active; however, he holds no office in the local.

**Local 830—Retail Radio Salesmen**<sup>166</sup>—This local is attempting to organize all the Vim Radio Stores, one of which is on 125th Street. At that store the managers are fooling the Negro public; they took the porters, dressed them up like salesmen and took their pictures. Displaying these pictures in the window,

<sup>164</sup> Correspondence with the Secretary, September 16, 1935.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Mr. Goldman, Business Manager, September 18, 1935.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Mr. Silverberg, Secretary-Manager, September 18, 1935.

they put up a sign reading — "We don't discriminate against Negro clerks." When Negroes go in the store the Negro men meet them and take them in the store. After fumbling around for just a moment they will turn the customer over to one of the white salesmen. In the mornings and evenings these same Negro men sweep and mop the floors and do all the porter work. To do away with that situation and install in the shop—or make the same fellows—some real Negro clerks is the immediate program of the local.

The local was organized in May, 1934. It has at present 175 members, 1 of whom is a Negro. There are no Negro officers, but "the one Negro member is the best in the union."

Local 906—Cigar Clerks <sup>187</sup>—The membership of this local is made up exclusively of cigar and tobacco salesmen and handlers of the Schulte Cigar Stores. No store has Negro clerks, but several of them have stockroom men who are Negroes. Since the jurisdiction of the local covers all cigar and tobacco handlers in the Schulte Stores, these men have been admitted.

The local was organized in October, 1934. It has 450 members, 20 of whom are Negro stockroom workers. They are full members but none are officers.

The local has not yet considered the possibility of making some of these Negro members clerks or salesmen. It is satisfied to keep them working at the type of work in which they were when the stores were organized. Their activity is little because they do not attend meetings regularly, but the relationship between white and Negro members is "quite friendly."

Local 1006—Retail Clothing Salesmen <sup>188</sup>—The Business Agent of this local tells of its experience with Negro workers. "It's too bad that we have not been able to organize the colored salesman on 125th Street yet. All of the white clerks there are organized. Although we find it difficult, we will continue until every salesman or clerk on 125th Street is organized." He as-

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Mr. Cooney, Secretary, September 18, 1935.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with D. M. Schombrum, Business Agent, September 10, 1935.

serted that the Negroes were afraid to risk being caught organizing by their employers. In order to make their jobs "what they think secure", they stick to the employers and consequently "suffer terrible working conditions and wages." So far not one Negro has applied for membership in the union, he said.

The union has a membership of 500, none of whom are Negroes. The initiation fee is not yet definitely determined since the local was just affiliated with the R. C. I. P. A. in June, 1935 and has been undergoing a period of reorganization to continue to meet the requirements which the R. C. I. P. A. makes of its locals.

Local 1102—Dry Goods Clerks<sup>169</sup>—So far, it has one Negro member who was admitted when it organized a shop in the Bronx. Organized in April 1935, it has just begun real active work. Among its definite plans is the effort to organize the Negro and white worker in the Harlem area, especially on 125th Street. It is planning to use Cecil Crawford, its colored member, to contact most of the colored clerks because when they see white men coming to talk to them about unions, they feel that all they want is the dues. "We are confident that Crawford can do the job because he is of a very good element. A few days ago in our membership meeting he was very active, taking the floor for discussion several times."

The employer-union agreement of Local 1102 has a clause making the employer agree that he will not discriminate against any member of the union "because of race, color, creed, religion, age, sex or political affiliation."

DOLL AND TOY WORKERS' UNION, Local 18230 A. F. of L.:<sup>170</sup>—Organized in 1932, the Union has 2,000 regular members, 15 of whom are Negroes. Although this is a mixed local where "each member is the same as his fellow member," there are no Negro officers or Executive Board members. This is accounted for by the local secretary who declared that Negro members are

<sup>169</sup> Interview with J. Schaffron, Business Agent, September 10, 1935.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Miss Larkin, Secretary, September 25, 1935.

not "over interested about attending meetings"; consequently, they never get elected to office.

**HARDWARE AND CROCKERY WORKERS' UNION, WHOLESALE, Local 18943:**<sup>171</sup>—This local union merely reported that among its 1,000 members there are 8 Negro members who are "very quiet" and who hold no offices.

**JEWELRY WORKERS' UNION, INTERNATIONAL:**<sup>172</sup>—Two New York locals of this union furnished information.

**Local 1—Jewelry Workers**—There are three Negro members in this local. They began work as porters and helpers about the work shops where they learned to smelt and press metals. Exhibiting a high degree of skill at this they were taken into union membership. They enjoy all the privileges of the members, pay the same dues, get the same wages as members in these crafts and take an active part in the meetings and activities of the local. The total membership figures were withheld.

**Local 89—Optical Jewelry Workers**<sup>173</sup>—Organized in August 1933, it has now its original membership of 427 whites and 23 Negroes. Since its origin, it has not taken in any new members because all those who are now in are not employed and because it wanted to somewhat establish itself firmly. The Negro members are "o. k. to work with." "They are good members, attend the meetings and pay up their dues." In the local there are no Negro officers, and they do not serve on any committees.

**LATHERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION, WOOD, WIRE AND METAL: Local 8—Metal Lathers**<sup>174</sup>—The president of this local reported that it was organized in 1899; that it has 350 members of whom 10 are Negroes; and that Negroes have "the same rights as anybody else without any prejudice."

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Joseph Ellin, Secretary, September 24, 1935.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Peter Garcia, President, August 23, 1935.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with Sebastian Sebalde, Organizer, August 12, 1935.

<sup>174</sup> Correspondence with Terderico Quinto, President, September 19, 1935.



**MINERAL WATER WORKER'S UNION:**<sup>176</sup> The organizer of this little independent union reported, "Our membership is a very small one, only 55 members confined to syphone filling. We have no Negro members."

**OFFICE WORKERS' UNION:**<sup>176</sup> This is an independent union accepting as members bookkeepers, accountants, typists, stenographers, switchboard, telephone and telegraph operators, office boys, department store clerks, and other "white collar" workers. Practically all of its 150 Negro members are office boys, department store clerks and workers and miscellaneous "white collar" workers. The total membership is about 2,200. One Negro is an Executive Board Member. This union is making definite efforts to organize Negro workers. It has set up a Harlem committee to do special work in organizing the "white collar" workers in Harlem, especially on 125th Street.

**PAPER BOX MAKERS' UNION, a Local 18239 A. F. of L.:**<sup>177</sup> The box-making industry is divided mainly into two divisions—the set-up box industry and the fibre box industry. Local 18239 is composed of set-up box makers—among whom the percentage of Negro workers is generally very small. In this local there are 25 Negro members in the total membership of 1,000.

The Business Agent commented, "We appeal to all workers who are box-makers. All are invited to our mass meetings and lectures, and all are organized alike. Negroes in our union are very active members and very good members."

There are three Negro shop chairmen who are over shops in which the majority of the workers are white.

**PHARMACISTS' UNION OF GREATER NEW YORK:**<sup>178</sup>—In Harlem most of the drug stores owned by whites employ white or Spanish pharmacists. The Negro drugstore owners are usually their own pharmacists. Of the 1,550 members of the union, 2

<sup>176</sup> Correspondence with M. G. Walpert, Organizer, October 4, 1935.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with J. Stone and G. Lane, Organizers, September 18, 1935.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Mr. Weinber, Business Agent, September 13, 1935.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with Leon J. Davis Organizer, August 22, 1935.

are Negroes, both of whom have joined recently—one in January, 1935 and the other in May, 1935. Both are "quiet and easy going" and attend the meetings only once in a while. Neither of them holds an office but both are full-fledged members and registered pharmacists. The union is definitely planning at present to recruit Negro members and to attempt to place them in all the drug stores in the Harlem area.

**POCKET BOOK WORKERS' UNION, INTERNATIONAL:**<sup>179</sup> — Of the 2,000 members there is an estimate of 23 Negroes, all of whom are unskilled workers—common helpers. There are not any cutters, framers, makers or operators. Mr. Ladermen, Manager, states that they never attend meetings—"not even the membership meeting"—and never did hold office. "They let their dues lag, and we have to suspend them at times."

**SALESMEN'S UNION OF GREATER NEW YORK, PROVISION:**<sup>180</sup>— Organized in 1934 and affiliated with the United Hebrew Trades, this union has 200 members, all of whom are Jews—because "the business is all Jewish." Because of the nature of the business the officers of this union feel that "Negro membership would be undesirable and unwelcome."

**SALES PEOPLE'S UNION OF GREATER NEW YORK, RETAIL WOMEN'S APPAREL:**<sup>181</sup> — In this independent union, organized in 1933, there are at present no Negroes in its membership of 500. It reported that it had a Negro member in 1934, a girl who worked in a Harlem department store, and that it has under consideration at present applications from several others. "After a short while" the Negro member dropped out of the union despite its efforts to encourage her to remain. Notwithstanding this experience, it is putting on a definite program of organization of Harlem stores.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Mr. Laderman, Manager, August 5, 1935.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with the Secretary (name withheld), July 26, 1935.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Mr. Laskowitz, Secretary, September 19, 1935.

UPHOLSTERERS', CARPET AND LINOLEUM MECHANICS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF NORTH AMERICA:

Local 44—Upholsterers<sup>182</sup>—The crafts covered by this union are custom upholsterers, high-class furniture workers, curtain, drapery and wall covering workers. Since 1899 this local has been engaged in this work and has never had Negroes in its membership which is at present 550. "We have no Negroes in this union because the customers we serve wouldn't accept them. Of all the upholstery workers this is the highest class. Why, none of us could imagine a Negro being sent to do upholstery work in the Park Avenue mansions," was the secretary's opinion.

Local 45—Women Upholsterers<sup>183</sup>—Organized in 1916. The craft covered by this local is interior decorating. As indicated by the name, the work of this local is done by the women upholsterers. There were four Negro members of this local just after it organized, but "for some reason or other" they have all dropped out. Although they were quiet at the meeting and "never said a word", they were among the "most efficient workers."

Local 70—Carpet and Linoleum Layers<sup>184</sup>—Organized 1902. This local, too, has never had a Negro member, because, asserted its business representative, it has never received an application from any Negro workers of this craft. Interesting to note in passing are the high initiation fee of \$300 and the three-year apprenticeship term set up by this local as a condition of membership.

Local 70B — Carpet and Linoleum Layers<sup>185</sup> — Organized in early 1935. In this young local which was recently affiliated with the U. C. & L. M. I. U of N. A. there are three Negroes

<sup>182</sup> Interview with James A. Weaner, Secretary, August 27, 1935.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Mrs. Nora Long, Secretary, August 28, 1935.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Mr. Kelly, Business Representative, August 28, 1935.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Ben Goldberg, Business Representative, August 28, 1935.

in the total membership of 135. As an independent organization the local existed for several years before the above affiliation in May, 1935. When it affiliated, two of its present Negro members were members, and later the other joined in July, 1935. Unlike the case of Local 70 special efforts have been made to organize the Negro workers in the Harlem area. "The boys in Harlem are not given so much to labor unions. Before we affiliated with the International we conducted special organizational campaigns in that area, but we never could convince the workers. They stick with the employers."

Local 71—Carpet Sewers<sup>186</sup>—In this small local of 1845 members, there are no Negroes. "Since our organization in 1916 we have not come in contact with any Negro carpet sewers. The local has had no dealings with Negroes."

Local 76—Wholesale Upholsterers.<sup>187</sup> Out of a membership of 500 in the local, there is only one Negro. This Negro gained membership when a branch of the Industrial Furniture Workers' Union, a Communist organization, merged with this local on July 1, 1935, bringing with it 150 members including this one Negro. The Negro member is not an upholsterer; he is just a cushion maker; therefore, he does not receive the same wage as the skilled upholsterers.

Local 76B—Furniture Workers<sup>188</sup>—Prior to July, 1935, this local was known as the National Industrial Furniture Workers' Union. At that date, it merged with local 76 of the U. I. U. and through it affiliated with the A. F. of L. There are 50 Negroes in the total membership of 500, and they have been with the local since its origin. The recording secretary remarked, "I find some no good Negroes among us just as I find no good Irishmen or Italians, or Jews, but the number of bum Negroes is higher, in proportion." He points out further

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Miss H. Cahill, Business Agent and Secretary, August 28, 1935.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Mr. Brandler, Secretary-Treasurer, August 7, 1935.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Mr. Zelben, Recording Secretary, August 7, 1935.

that Negroes in this local do not attend meetings and consequently, hold no offices. However, they do pay their dues regularly because they know that they would be suspended "just as we do all the other workers."

Local 140—Mattress Makers<sup>190</sup>—organized in 1914 and composed of 300 members, 15 of whom are Negroes. Since 1931 Negroes have been "fairly good" members. In addition to attending meetings regularly they take active part in the other local activities. None are officers.

Local 140B — Metal and Spring Workers<sup>190</sup> — Organized in 1933 and composed of 1,000 members of whom 450 are Negroes who have been members since the inception of the local. Practically all of these members, residents of Harlem, were employed at the same place—the Spring Product Corporation of the Bronx—when they were organized. On June 25, 1935 they went out on strike, seeking union recognition, wage increases and better working conditions. Although the local has supported these to the fullest extent, little progress had been made up to October because of strike-breaking by other workers. At first the Corporation used white strike breakers, mainly Italians. Finding this a costly method because of the high wages demanded by the workers, it then turned to Negro strike breakers from Harlem. It is reported that at that time the Corporation brought to its factory these workers daily in curtained trucks. Despite these obstacles the local and its members are still engaged in a valiant fight at the time of this writing.

WINDOW CLEANERS' PROTECTIVE UNION: Local 2—Window Cleaners<sup>191</sup> organized in 1916 and composed of 500 members of whom 50 are Negroes. According to the secretary-manager Negroes have always been strong, active members of this local.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Mr. Sirota, Business Agent, July 26, 1935.

<sup>190</sup> Interviews with Mr. Gordon, Business Agent, July 26, 1935 and October 7, 1935. *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 8, 1935, September 16, 1935 and October 5, 1935.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Abe Rosenblott, Secretary-Manager, July 26, 1935.

Today, the recording secretary is a Negro, and he follows another Negro who held that position for five years. No other Negro members are officers.

From year to year the local has held strikes. Although members of the local usually remained faithful, it suffered from both Negro and white strike breakers. Those who were residents of New York were organized while those who were imported were not asked to join.

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## V I T A

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