



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters collection

1939-1987

Sc MG 250

Summary

Creator: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

Title: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters collection

Date: 1939-1987

Size: 2.54 linear feet (6 boxes)

Source: Gift of Joseph Wilson, on behalf of Maida Springer Kemp, Flossie Smith, Mr. and Mrs. H. C. McQueen, Rebecca R. Hayes, Ruth Morrison, Renee Epstein, Marie Mosley, and Harold B. Desmarais, 1986-2001.

Abstract: The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) organized railway porters (traditionally an occupation for African-Americans) to bargain with the Pullman Company which held a virtual monopoly on the nation's sleeping car facilities. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters collection includes printed matter, correspondence, legal documents, addresses by A. Philip Randolph, and other material reflecting the activities of this union.

Preferred citation: [Item], Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters collection, Sc MG 250, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Part of the Schomburg NEH Automated Access to Special Collections Project. Accessioned by Janice Quinter, July 2004.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Art and Artifacts Division: various artifacts

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound (MIRS) Division: moving image materials. For more information, please contact the division at schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org or 212-491-2270.

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs

Creator History

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) organized railway porters (traditionally an occupation for African Americans) to bargain with the Pullman Company, which held a virtual monopoly on the nation's sleeping car facilities. The BSCP was founded in 1925 in New York City to counteract the poor wages, long hours, and other injustices practiced by the Pullman Car Company. A. Philip Randolph became president of the Brotherhood in 1928. In the mid-1930s the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the New Deal's National Mediation Board recognized the BSCP.

In 1942, Randolph organized the March on Washington Movement in an attempt to force the federal government to end discrimination in war-related employment and segregation in the military. The March was aborted when President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 which outlawed discrimination in unions and companies doing business with the federal government and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to oversee compliance. Although the Executive Order did not mention the military, Randolph, nonetheless, had forced the national government to admit to the existence of widespread racial discrimination in employment opportunities and to accept responsibility to provide remedies for that situation.

Scope and Content Note

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Collection includes printed matter, correspondence, legal documents, addresses by A. Philip Randolph, and other material reflecting the activities of this union. The correspondence files include outgoing letters relating to labor and union rights. There is substantial legal correspondence with the Delson, Levin and Gordon law firm (1950s-1960s), which represented the BSCP. There are also letters to and from Randolph, the international president; Benjamin F. McLaurin, international field organizer (1950s) and Eastern Zone supervisor (1960s); Thomas Patterson, who was BSCP Eastern Zone supervisor from 1951-1956; and BSCP International President C. L. Dellums (1968-1970). The correspondence often concerns the cases of individual workers, pensions, and contract rights. Included are addresses and resolutions submitted by Randolph at various conventions of the BSCP. The papers also contain two union contracts between the BSCP and the Pullman Company (1953), and the BSCP and the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company (1969); clippings (1960-1977); programs from events honoring the BSCP; and financial records, including ledgers and financial journals. There are also constitutions and agreements, executive memoranda, resolutions, annual and financial reports, and contract settlements. Legal documents include the proceedings of the litigation for Fred Thompson vs BSCP (1961), a seniority case in which Thompson claimed that the BSCP discriminated against him because he was not constant in his union membership. A substantial part of the collection includes the reports of proceedings and minutes for biennial and triennial conventions and anniversary celebrations, which contain addresses and resolutions submitted by Randolph and others, 1940-1975.

Additionally, there are files containing the by-laws of the Women's Auxiliary of the BSCP and descriptions of the accomplishments of Rosina C. Tucker, its first secretary-treasurer (1954-1984). A scrapbook of clippings and miscellaneous flyers documents the role of the BSCP and blacks in the labor movement. Most of the documents relate to the proposed 1942 March on Washington, Executive Order 8802, A. Philip Randolph, the Fair Employment Practice Committee, and African-American women and national defense. The clippings are from 1941-1975, with the bulk from 1941-1942.

There is also a small collection of items (1944-1952) related to Berry J. Slater, a porter with the Pullman Company, which contains a BSCP membership book, membership working cards, and a Pullman Company handbook, *Instructions to Porters, Attendants and Bus Boys* (1952).

Key Terms

Subjects

African American women
African Americans -- Employment
Labor unions, Black
Porters--Labor unions
Railroads--Employees--Labor unions

Names

Dellums, C. L. (Cottrell Laurence)
McLaurin, Benjamin F., 1906-1989
Randolph, A. Philip (Asa Philip), 1889-1979
Tucker, Rosina Corrothers
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Ladies Auxiliary
March on Washington Movement (Organization)
Pullman Car Company
United States. Committee on Fair Employment Practice

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Constitutions and agreements 1921-1965
 - Correspondence 1946-1987
- b. 1 f. 2 1946-1951
- b. 1 f. 3 1951-1969
- b. 1 f. 4 1952-1961
- b. 1 f. 5 1953-1987
- b. 1 f. 6 1954-1968
- b. 1 f. 7 1962-1964
- b. 1 f. 8 Employees' pensions 1952-1955
 - Legal 1944-1971
- b. 2 f. 1 1964-1971
- b. 2 f. 2 Individual employees 1944-1955
- b. 2 f. 3 Briefs 1948
- b. 2 f. 4 Pressley vs. Smith 1949-1951
- b. 2 f. 5-6 Fred Thompson vs. BSCP 1958-1966
 - Conventions 1940-1977
- b. 2 f. 7-8 Biennial Convention and Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration, New York City 1940
 - Includes report and minutes.
- b. 2 f. 9 Regional Conference, Atlanta 1946
 - includes report of the proceedings.
- b. 2 f. 10 Sixth Biennial Convention and Twenty-Third Anniversary Celebration, Detroit 1948
 - Includes report of the proceedings.
- b. 2 f. 11 25th Anniversary program 1950
- b. 2 f. 12 First Triennial Convention and Twenty-Eighth Anniversary, Los Angeles 1953
 - Includes programs and press releases.
- b. 2 f. 13 Third Triennial Convention and Twenty-Fourth Anniversary, Chicago 1959
 - Includes address and report by A. Philip Randolph.
- b. 2 f. 14 Fourth Triennial Convention and Thirty-Seventh Anniversary, Montreal 1962
 - Includes report of proceedings.
- b. 2 f. 15 Fifth Triennial Convention and Fortieth Anniversary, Chicago 1965
 - Includes report of proceedings.
- b. 2 f. 16 Sixth Triennial Convention and Forty-Third Anniversary, New Orleans 1968
 - Includes report by A. Philip Randolph.
- b. 2 f. 17 Convention, Chicago 1975
 - Includes resolution and report of proceedings.
- b. 3 f. 1 Programs 1950-1977
- b. 3 f. 2 Revised rules 1953
- b. 3 f. 3 Statement by Benjamin F. McLaurin on the merger of Pennsylvania Railroad and New York Central Railroad ca. 1953
- b. 3 f. 4 Union contracts 1953-1969

- b. 3 f. 5-6 Reports 1965-1971
 - Includes "Digest of an Argument in Support Pullman Company Granting Improved Conditions and Increased Wages to Pullman Porters and Maids".
- b. 3 f. 7 Election results 1971
- b. 3 f. 8 Group plan of organization
 - Ladies Auxiliary
- b. 3 f. 9 1942
- b. 3 f. 10 Printed matter on Rosina C. Tucker 1954-1984
- b. 3 f. 11 Ephemera 1953-1962
- b. 3 f. 12 Flyers
 - Newspapers and clippings
- b. 3 f. 13 1947-1954
- b. 3 f. 14 1960-1971
- b. 3 f. 15 Miscellaneous 1946-1980
- b. 3 f. 16 Friends of A. Philip Randolph High School 1982-1987
 - Randolph, A. Philip 1944-1979
- b. 4 f. 1 Biographical information and testimonials 1969-1979
- b. 4 f. 2 1944-1971
 - b. 5 Scrapbook 1941-1975
- b. 6 f. 1 Smith, Charles W. (porter) 1940-1942
- b. 6 f. 2 Slater, Berry J. (porter)
 - Financial records 1939-1971
- b. 6 f. 3 Ledger 1961
- b. 6 f. 4 Expense account and receipts 1939-1946
- b. 6 f. 5 Schedule of income for three years ca. 1968-1971
- b. 6 f. 6 Work schedules 1961-1966