

Scope and Content

The Blacks in the Railroad Industry Collection (1946–1954) is a compilation of a variety of materials documenting the struggle of black railroad employees against ouster from the industry by the collusive actions of the companies and the unions. While provenance seems to be uncertain, holograph notes on many of the documents appear to have been written by Robert Wood, editor of the *Railroad Workers' Link*, a newspaper published by the Railroad Committee of the Communist party. In addition, the few original items in the collection are addressed specifically to him or to the *Link*.

The papers have been divided into six sections: 1) Correspondence, 2) Unions and Union-related Organizations, 3) Writings, 4) Legal Documents, 5) Memoranda, and 6) Printed Material. The collection does not form a cohesive unit; rather, it is an artificial collection of materials seemingly gathered for research and information purposes. Therefore, it has been organized by subject or type of document; within that sequence the papers are arranged chronologically.

The **Correspondence** file is composed of a miscellaneous group of letters to and from various individuals. The majority of the letters are mimeographed and were intended for wide dissemination. One of these is a letter from Archibald Bromsen stating the Federation of Southern Colored Locomotive Firemen Unions' position on the proposal by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen to modify the 1941 Southeastern Carriers Conference Agreement. The letter is accompanied by a copy of the agreement. Also in this file is a typed copy of a speech by Charles H. Houston that was sent to Wood with a cover letter from Henry Lee Moon's secretary. The speech, entitled "The Legal Struggle for Protection of Minority Workers' Rights on American Railroads," was presented at the 1949 annual conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Included in the **Unions and Union-related Organizations** section are documents from the Negro Railway Labor Executives Committee, the Railroad Employees Association against Discrimination, and the United Transport Service Employees. There are also several membership rosters from the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a few black lodges affiliated with the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America, an unidentified union or unions of black dining car employees, and a list of both black and white union members under the jurisdiction of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The materials from the Negro Railway Labor Executives Committee consist of a 1948 press release and minutes from meetings in March and April 1948 and February 1949. The 1948 minutes and press release relate to the formation of the NRLEC and the publication of the *Negro Railway Labor News*, the Committee's official organ. The documents show the active role played by Charles H. Houston, Joseph C. Waddy, and Archibald Bromsen in establishing the NRLEC.

The Railroad Employees Association against Discrimination was a New York-based organization, formed in the early 1950s. The documents include two mimeographed letters and a press release concerned with the Long Island Railroad's employment policy for blacks. Additionally, there is a REAAD *News Bulletin* and other documents that provide information about the REAAD's program.

The last documents in the second section consist of United Transport Service Employees-CIO materials, including two newsletters for October 1949 reporting on the activities of the

various locals within the union, and a leaflet recruiting members among Pennsylvania Railroad employees.

The **Writings** section consists of an untitled thirty-six page typed draft of an article, with editorial corrections and additions in what might be Robert Wood's handwriting. The draft may have been written by Wood. However, clear authorship is uncertain, as his name as the author has been crossed out. The subject of the typescript is the role played by the all-white railroad unions in excluding blacks from the industry by forcing the railroads through strike threats and contract clauses either to fire or not hire blacks.

Legal Documents contain a carbon copy of papers filed by Charles H. Houston, Joseph C. Waddy, and Oliver W. Hill in the case of *Willie J. Rolex et al. v. Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company et al.* The document, a motion for an "injunction pendente lite," was directed at enjoining the ACLR and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen from enforcing the Southeastern Carriers Conference Agreement of 1941. Attached to the motion are several affidavits and the points and authorities in support of the motion.

The **Memoranda** were prepared for the 1949 U.S. House of Representatives Special Subcommittee on Education and Labor hearings, chaired by Adam C. Powell, on fair employment practices legislation. The memoranda deal with a variety of issues dating back to 1917, including wages of black workers, attempts by white unions and the railroad companies to drive blacks out of the industry, and racial employment policies during World Wars I and II. There are also two chronologies of the discriminatory acts practiced by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen against black workers. These documents were incorporated into the official government record of the hearings, which was published in *Hearings before a Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949).

The last section—**Printed Material**—is composed of a pamphlet, newspapers, fact sheets, press releases, and clippings. The pamphlet, *Let Freedom Ride the Rails*, was published in 1954 by the National Negro Labor Council. It briefly covers the 1943 Fair Employment Practices Committee hearings on the railroad industry; the employment status of black workers; the role of the railroads, unions, and federal government in denying employment opportunities to blacks, as well as the efforts of blacks in seeking redress of their grievances through the courts; and the National Negro Labor Council's program of action.

The newspapers include three complete issues of the *Negro Railway Labor News* (1948–1950) and one complete issue each of the *Railroad Workers' Link* (July 1950) and the *Black Worker* (April 1949). Because the latter two were single issues only, they have been filed with the Press Releases and Newspaper Clippings (1948–1953). This section also contains clippings from those and other black newspapers, in addition to several clippings from the "Railroad Workers' Page" of the *Daily Worker* (1949–1950).

The Fact Sheets in this section contain information dealing with the status of black workers in the railroad industry; the press releases include a speech given by Charles H. Houston at the 1949 National Urban League annual conference, entitled "Foul Employment Practice on the Railroads."