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EDITORIAL

PULLMAN CONDUCTORS WANT NEGRO PORTERS TO JOIN WITH THEIR UNION

By WILLIAM PICKENS
(Reprinted from St. Louis Argus)

But necessary for what? We think "necessary" to keep the Pullman conductors in their jobs. When any business concern begins to retrench in personnel, it cuts off first the most unnecessary parts of its personnel: the Pullman Company cut off many "conductors," four hundred or more of them according to the report of the conductors, themselves. Why did they cut off conductors instead of cutting off porters? Because the conductors were "white"? No siree: no such nonsense as that in America—anywhere. It was because the conductors are less necessary to the business than are porters: a pullman car can be run without a conductor, but not without a porter. Even in the most prosperous times some pullman cars were run only with a porter in charge, or even several cars with a head porter.

But these porters never have had any rights which either the Pullman Company or the Pullman conductors were bound to respect. Even Mr. John Passenger was "always right", however nasty he might be or however big a lie he might choose to tell on the porter.

In "them good old days" the conductors paid no attention whatever to the plight of the porters: the porter belonged to a lower class in the animal kingdom. The conductor was insulted at the very idea of taking the porter into a union with conductors and giving him the right of organized self-defense. Why it would spoil porters even to give them the right to talk back to anybody—even to a brutal drunk, a dirty little traveling snob, or especially to a tyrannous conductor.

But finally the porters (without the slightest gesture of help from conductors) succeeded in organizing a union or "brotherhood" of their own and lastly along came old man Depression and hit the conductors in the solar plexus. And now the conductors are trying to absorb, or rather to subjugate, this porters union for the benefit of the conductors. And we are amused, but not surprised, to read the following paragraph from a letter sent out by "Mr. Warfield, president," of the Conductors' Brotherhood, to all the conductors telling them just why the conductors' organization has finally decided to extend

a welcome hand to the porters to come in—but to come in at the back door and to remain in the kitchen:

"It took this step only after repeated requests from our members to do something to stop the loss of conductors' jobs to porters in charge and to seek relief from unfair working conditions generally. Acquiring jurisdiction over porters makes it possible to remove the incentive to put porters in conductors' places, by reviving the rule established under federal control providing that the wage runs with the place. This would give conductors' rates of pay to porters in charge. Had we represented porters from the beginning, this rule could have been preserved, and today there would probably be three or four hundred conductors working instead of being on furlough. There are many many other advantages of great value to both parties in this joint representation."

I say to pullman porters: "Watch your step." This is the most classic motto for you in this emergency. If these conductors can get you in and under they can put the screws on to keep you from accepting places as porters-in-charge or as ticket collectors by any other name. Why not suggest to them that your organization and theirs merge into a union of pullman car employees," with all of you on equal footing? That they may refuse, of course, but it will be a good way for you to get rid of them on their own motion.

Beware of the Greeks when they bring gifts, especially since they never brought them when the gifts were really and sorely needed.

THESE THOUGHTS

May these thoughts, be just tiny reeds,

To stir hearts and minds to kindly deeds;

One day of joy, one day of sorrow, Though wealthy today we may be poor tomorrow.

Such is life, from day to day So be careful what your tongue may say.

Kind words will cheer a struggling brother,

Therefore let's all help one another;

Life's trails are hard enough; to bear

And each and everyone has his share.

Some in sickness, with its aches and pains,

Some in loss of worldly gains: Others through slander and shame

Suffer the loss of their good name.

Tales of kindly deeds, and words of cheer

Are welcome music to any ear;

So let's spread sunshine around about That people may laugh, sing and shout.

That greed and selfishness may cease

And our hearts and minds be filled with peace.

May faith, mercy and charity abound

Then joy and happiness will be found.

—Kewpie Oklar Buggs,
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