HOW CLASS WORKS PRESENTATION ON A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

A. Philip Randolph was born in Crescent City, Florida in 1889. He later moved to Jacksonville where he attended primary and secondary school at what was then Cookman Institute. His mother was a washerwoman and his father was an itinerant African Methodist Episcopal preacher. In 1911 he moved to Harlem and planned to become a stage actor, however he became deeply influenced by the socialist teachings of lecturer Hubert Harrison and City College professor Morris R. Cohen.¹ In 1917, he and Chandler Owen was asked by an employer of Negro headwaiters to edit a newsletter discussing their issues. They called the paper Hotel Messenger. Randolph and Owen were fired by this employer after they published the harsh truths of how headwaiters were exploiting the lesser paid sidewaiters. However they continued writing, editing, and publishing for the cause of the exploited Negro worker and continued their own magazine which became known as The Messenger. Both A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen co-edited The Messenger from 1917 to 1924, when Chandler left for Chicago after his brother’s passing. From 1925 until 1928, Randolph became the sole editor of the monthly periodical and used it to advance the cause of labor organizing among Negroes. It was funded by several sources, including subscribers and agents,

¹ Jeffrey Perry writes that Randolph and Chandler Owen attended nearly if not all of Hubert Harrison’s outdoor lectures on the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue in Harlem in 1916. Randolph called Harrison “the father of Harlem radicalism.” Jeffrey B. Perry, Hubert Harrison: The Father of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1917, (New York, Columbia, 2009), p.5, 265-266. About City College in the mid-teens of the twentieth century, A. Philip Randolph said: “he found the classrooms and corridors to be among ‘the hottest beds of radicalism in New York City.’” About Morris R. Cohen, Randolph said that Cohen “stirred more intellectual restlessness and discontent in him than any other teacher at City College.” Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p.60, 79-80.
which proved ultimately unreliable from year to year. A more reliable source of *The Messenger*’s funding came from the American Fund For Public Service, whose correspondence with Randolph this chapter will explore. In interviews, Randolph has admitted that his most reliable source of funding of *The Messenger* was his wife, Lucille Green Randolph, who owned a hair salon in Harlem before Randolph starts *The Messenger* and up until its last year. Randolph credits her as the most significant source of fundraising of *The Messenger*.² While the funding from his wife Lucille is harder to document, the funding from the American Fund For Public Service (AFPS) is less hard to document, and Randolph’s correspondence with the AFPS from 1922 to 1925 is discussed in this chapter. It should noted that during the tenure of *The Messenger*, efforts were made by Randolph to raise funds independently without the help of white liberal groups, however by 1922, Randolph appealed routinely to the AFPS for help.³ This appeal would not come without Randolph first establishing an editorial ideology with clear, defined characteristics.

In the very first November 1917 issue of *The Messenger* edited by Randolph and Owen, they call on their readers to oppose World War One on the grounds that it is a

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³ In the May/June 1919 issue of *The Messenger*, Randolph wrote: “for sixty days, beginning May 1st, [1919], the *Messenger* Publishing Company Inc., will place on the market five thousand share of stock at $5.00 per share—the same to be disposed of to make *The Messenger* the most powerful organ of public opinion in the world…” *The Messenger*, May/Jun 1919, (New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969), p.18. Pages are numbered according to the issues in the bound copies of the *Colored American Magazine*, published in New York by Negro Universities Press in 1969. Where page numbers were indicated in the actual text of *The Messenger*, they were cited.
war intended to, not make the world “safe for democracy” as Woodrow Wilson would
claim, but, in Randolph’s words, to “make profits out of the workingman, whether he
be white or black.”

Randolph was trying to teach his readers that supporting the war
meant supporting the efforts of those who owned food for soldiers, clothing for
soldiers, steel for battleships, “aeroplanes” and coal: “Mr. Common Man, do you own
any of these things? If you don’t then you cannot profit from the war.” This critique of
imperialism is a logical extension of the critiques of imperialism that Hopkins made in
the Colored American Magazine and the New Era Magazine. Randolph then challenged the
notion of whether the U.S. was actually governing by consent by participating in his
war. He changes Wilson’s famed statement of making the world “safe for democracy”
to making the world “safe for business interests.” Finally, following the militarism of
Harrison’s The Voice, in his editorial Randolph implores his readers:

Mr. Negro voter, vote your men into office! Why should you pay high rents
when you build the houses? Your Republican and Democratic leaders say that
you are extravagant...As a race, we are without ‘elective representation’ in the
burgs and the national assemblies. The greatest handicap, set-back and curse of
the Negro has been ‘political jobs.’ Those white politicians who do the bidding
of financial kinds of the country are the bosses of our big Negro leaders.

Randolph later gives an example of how Charles Anderson was given a political
job by Wilson in order to get some amount of the Negro vote, and after the election

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4 A. Philip Randolph, “Editorial,” The Messenger, November 1917, p.8..
Anderson was fired. Randolph ultimately encourages his readers not to vote for Negroes with “political jobs” who are endorsed by the two major parties, but to vote for those who genuinely vote for the educational and economic well being of all Negroes.

Randolph and Owen later describe the editorial tone of their paper:

We are no longer with Hotel Messenger. The radical tone of the editors’ writings did not set well with the…controller in the hotel field. We always did not say ‘nice things’ about the head waiters’ attitude toward the side waiters and the inadequate wages paid them. We edit with calm dispassionate poise. It shall be forward, aggressive, militant, revolutionary.

Randolph finally says in this first issue that markets need to be run “for service and not for profit.” This demand that markets be run for service and not for profit is a key theme throughout the speeches by those prominent activists of the Black Freedom Struggle like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who in 1967 said that a nation who spends more on military programs than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. King’s call for the nation to spend more on social programs than on military weapons is a result of Randolph’s initial call for markets being run “for service.” Jeffrey Perry writes that King is part of two great ideological trends of the Black Freedom movement: the labor/civil rights trend and the race/nationalist trend. The race/nationalist trend says Perry is identified more with Malcolm X. According to Perry, Hubert Harrison provided “the key link” in the ideological unity between the

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6 Perry writes that Charles Anderson conspired with Fred Moore under the aegis of Booker T. Washington to fire Hubert Harrison from his job at a New York City Post Office in 1911. Randolph presented Anderson as having a “political job” and not being deserving of his vote because ultimately Anderson did not try to represent interests of Negroes. Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Father of Harlem Radicalism*, p.132.

labor/civil rights trend, and the race/nationalist trend. Randolph’s initial description of this editorial ideology in his inaugural November 1917 issue of *The Messenger* as being “forward, aggressive, militant, revolutionary” will eventually identify him as part of the labor/civil rights trend of the Black Freedom movement. This is a trend that would radicalize E.D. Nixon in the twenties who would later recruit Martin Luther King to be the public face of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Randolph’s editing of *The Messenger*, inspired by Harrison’s activism is responsible for King’s place in the Black Freedom Struggle.

In most European cities, Randolph continues in this initial issue, gas, electric, light, telephone service and transportation cost much less than in American cities because they are owned and operated by the cities. He said this to argue: “you will get cheaper light and transportation when the city owns these public utilities and operates them for service and not for profit.” He encouraged his readers to see that as long as utilities like these are privately owned, the cost to have them will increase and continually keep those who use them in economic poverty.

By the January 1918 issue of *The Messenger*, the struggle against imperialism had a stronger imperative. This year saw stronger efforts by the U.S. government to use their imperial invasion to repress free speech of its citizens protesting its nation’s imperialism. In June of 1917 Wilson and the U.S. Congress passed the Espionage Act,

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9 Randolph, *The Messenger*, November 1917, p. 34.
which made obstructing the draft into World War One a crime. By the same time next year, the Act had been amended to make even the attempt at obstruction a felony.\textsuperscript{10}

David Shannon writes that between June 15, 1917 and July 1, 1918, persecutions under the 1917 Sedition Act totaled nearly one thousand.\textsuperscript{11}

Before the end of this year, Randolph and Owen are arrested in Cleveland for selling *The Messenger* and encouraging draft dodging from World War One. This violated the Espionage Act of 1917, which forbade citizens from obstructing the conscription in World War One. Jervis Anderson writes that Randolph and Owen jailed for two days, held on $1,000 bail and got legal representation from Seymour Stedman of Chicago who was soon to appear in the defense of Eugene Debs, the white Socialist Party leader who would receive a ten year prison term in 1918. During this year, both Randolph and Debs were openly defying the Espionage Act of 1917 and encouraging Americans to avoid conscription into World War One. Jervis Anderson writes that in Eugene Debs, Randolph found “a white man” with a strong spiritual character, with “such a great and warm feeling for the human mission of socialism.”\textsuperscript{12} He would later respectfully acknowledge Debs in his November 1920 issue when he writes to the working class man saying “he is told by his leaders, to vote for Harding, when it is to his interest to vote for Debs.”\textsuperscript{13} In a 1971 interview, Randolph told William Wray that he and Owen enjoyed his association with Debs and the fact that there were such people in 1918.

\textsuperscript{10} Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, p.105. Anderson mentions Kate Richards O’Hare who had been imprisoned for making an antiwar speech in North Dakota. *The Messenger* in its pages also captured some of this government suppression.


\textsuperscript{12} Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, p.76.

\textsuperscript{13} Randolph, *The Messenger*, November 1920, p.132.
“living among Negroes and carrying on a program of Socialist theory.” Randolph called him “one of the great labor leaders of this country.”¹⁴ Randolph’s relationship with Debs made him different from Hopkins in the sense that he had an ally in actively protesting his government’s recruitment of the workers to try to secure the raw materials of other sovereign nations. What Hopkins fictionalized in her interracial solidarity in Winona, Randolph actualized in his conscription protest in 1918. Randolph recalled that the judge who heard his 1918 Espionage case asked him: “don’t you know that you are opposing your own government and that you are subject to imprisonment for treason?” Randolph said: “we told him we believed in the principle of human justice and that our fright to express our conscience was above the law.” The judge later replied “take make my advice and get out of town. If we catch you here again, you won’t be so lucky.”¹⁵ Randolph and Owen followed that advice and later continued to edit according to their “principle of human justice” in The Messenger. In the July 1918 issue of The Messenger Randolph describes how Du Bois conception of politics does not seek the welfare of the Negro voter as these editors claim they do but is instead “strictly opportunist.” They describe Du Bois:

within the last six years he has been Democratic, Socialist and Republican. His attitude toward the parties is the old, antiquated conception of swinging on to the one thought most likely to win. That accounted for his support of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, when the split in the Republican party presaged a Democratic victory. Propitiation-for-favors policy!¹⁶

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¹⁶ Editorial, The Messenger, July 1918, p. 27.
Randolph and Owen ultimately discourage this kind of holding on to one of the two mainstream parties “most likely to win.” They encourage only voting for those elected officials who are purely independent and will not change their policy agenda according to the economic demands of one of the two mainstream political parties. This is also the first issue that Randolph mentions the economic power of Madam C.J. Walker by name. *The Messenger* claims that unlike Du Bois, Walker wields an economic power that is significant because it creates “social betterment” outside of the two mainstream political parties. It is known that Randolph’s wife Lucille graduated from Walker’s Beauty School and because of this relationship was probably able to acquire some unaccounted funds from Walker for *The Messenger*. Randall writes: “As James J. Hill is known as the empire builder; Charles Schwab a captain of industry, J. Pierpont Morgan a general of finance; so may Madame C.J. Walker be justly known as the Joan d’Arc of Negro business.” Randolph describes her as tireless in effecting social betterment. He includes an advertisement in this issue entitled “Madame C. J. Walker’s Preparation for the Hair” here. Randolph celebrates the unique opportunity he saw in Walker being able to support causes not endorsed by the two mainstream political parties. Madame C.J. Walker by supporting causes such as antilynching that affected “social betterment,” fulfilled Randolph’s editorial ideology of encouraging organizing not only around the

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This recalls the work of other Black women entrepreneurs such as banker Maggie Lena Walker whose funds supported the Independent Order of St. Luke which was one of the many Black mutual aid societies that flourished in the nineteenth century. It also recalls the work of Mary Ellen Pleasant whose funds from running a San Francisco boardinghouse in the 1850s helped John Brown’s raid at Harper’s Ferry in 1859. Darlene Clark Hine, William C. Hine, Stanley Harrold, *African American Odyssey, Fourth Edition*, (Upper Saddle River (NJ), Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), p. 398 (on Walker), p. 241-242 (on Pleasant).
cause of labor but also around the cause of antilynching which affects how Black labor is treated.\textsuperscript{18}

In the March 1919 issue Randolph and Owen see the Bolshevik revolution in Russia as having an incredible potential to open the eyes of the \textit{The Messenger} readership to the reality that World War One was not about attacking Germany more than it was about the wealthiest continually trying to acquire more private wealth. Randolph and Owen decry both major parties trying to save Russia from Communism: “why…do the so-called liberals and bourgeois democrats desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Russia now? This is the most significant experiment in the international laboratory of world politics, sociology, and economics…Again we demand that the allies get out of Russia!”\textsuperscript{19}

Randolph in this issue writes that “the press is owned and controlled by the employing class and it is used to influence the minds of the races; to foment race hatred; it gives wide circulation to that insidious doctrine of the Negroes being the hewers of wood and drawers of water for white men.” He later says that Republican and Democratic leaders, like the press, are “paid by Rockefeller, Morgan, Armour, Carnegie, owners of Southern railroads, coal mines, lumber mills, turpentine stills, cotton-plantations, etc. who makes millions out of your labor.”\textsuperscript{20} Randolph is expecting that his

\textsuperscript{19} Editorial, \textit{The Messenger}, March 1919, p.8.
\textsuperscript{20} Editorial, \textit{The Messenger}, March 1919, p.11,12 Patrick Morrison reiterates A. Philip Randolph’s concern about media consolidation when he writes for FAIR.org [Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting] that Ben Bagdikian’s classic 1983 text \textit{The Media Monopoly} rightfully identified the dangerous consolidation of media ownership. Regarding newspapers, Morrison writes that “Bagdikian’s prediction [about the newspaper industry being
readership will begin to agitate against the white supremacist capitalist system. The supposed fruits of his editorial labor would not come for another seven years, however.

The December 1919 issue provided Randolph an opportunity to discuss the influence of the two party mainstream on education. He wrote: “the Republican and Democratic Government officials are not interested in educating the children of the masses, white or black.”

He later describes how economically infeasible it is for supporters of the Democratic Party to maintain a living, by challenging the idea this mainstream supports that citizens can realistically save a million dollars: “you would have to live one thousand years in order to save a million dollars. Do you get that?...These Republicans and Democrats are huge jokes. They take you for fools, and you are fools, if you believe what they tell you.” Randolph’s question of “do you get that?” speaks to the ways he hopes his readers would see that the Republican and Democratic parties are essentially ridiculing the masses in order to make more financial profit. By the end of 1922, Randolph sought steady financial support for The Messenger from the American Fund for Public Service. However this support came with significant strings that would threaten his editorial ideology. SEE THE PHOTO OF THE DOGS AND THE BONE.


BARRIERS TO RANDOLPH’S EDITORIAL IDEOLOGY

The American Fund For Public Service was founded as a result of Charles Garland refusing a million dollar inheritance. Garland told a reporter that he refused to take money from “a system which starves thousands while hundreds are stuffed.” He consequently became a celebrity at the start of a decade in which celebrity would become an obsession. In the February 1921 issue of *The Messenger*, however, Randolph did not admire Garland’s rejection of his inheritance: “it is not an expression of ‘sterling character’ it is just the symptom of a simpleton—the irrefutable evidence of a mental nut!”23 Randolph thought Garland should have used his wealth to spread his beliefs rather than making what Randolph saw as a purely symbolic gesture in rejecting his father’s inheritance. His 1922 statement ultimately asks whether Garland rejected his inheritance because of a genuine care and concern about the poorer working classes, or because he wanted to attract more profitable publicity to himself in a way that would create an image separate from his father’s. He carried some amount of this disdain in his correspondence with the American Fund For Public Service. Randolph applies this critique of motives also to Roger Baldwin who became executive director of the American Fund For Public Service. Baldwin before becoming director had a past, like Randolph’s, that demonstrated genuine activism for the cause of labor organizing.24 Randolph wrote in *The Messenger* to cheer up Baldwin yet wondered how

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24 Both Randolph and Baldwin were arrested for violating the Espionage Act of 1917. Randolph was arrested in Cleveland in 1918 for promoting *The Messenger* and encouraging young men to resist the draft to World War I.
Baldwin could “support liberalism and radicalism among whites and endorse reaction among Negroes.” Randolph noticed that Baldwin privileged labor organizing for whites more than he did Negroes. Gloria Garrett Samson, historian of the American Fund For Public Service writes that Roger Baldwin’s experience as a worker taught him that labor’s struggle for control of the jobs should happen exclusively by the workers themselves. Before corresponding with Randolph as of 1922, he founded the American Civil Liberties Union in 1920 which, Samson writes, was intended to enlighten “the rank and file citizens” who have been dazed by the kaleidoscopic changes of the last few years and deceived into accepting “the dictatorship of property in the name of patriotism.” However according to Baldwin’s scrupulous management of what was Garland’s inheritance, Baldwin treated the funds of AFPS as property. Baldwin wrote to Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Russell Sage asking for examples of their applications that the AFPS could emulate and present to fund applicants like Randolph. Samson writes

Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1971), p. 106; Baldwin was arrested and sentenced to a year in prison for openly resisting the draft. Samson writes that after Baldwin was released from prison in 1919, he announced “I am going to do what a so called intellectual can do in the labor movement and aid in the struggle of the workers to control society in the interest of the masses.” Randolph wrote to cheer up Baldwin yet wondered in his *Messenger* how Baldwin could “support liberalism and radicalism among whites and endorse reaction among Negroes.” Samson, *The American Fund*, p.11, 87. This law of 1917 is the one that whistleblower Bradley Manning is recently accused of violating when he allegedly leaked “classified” government cables to the independent news organization WikiLeaks in 2010. In his military-conducted pretrial hearing, prosecutors have not been able to clarify how Manning’s alleged violations aided “the enemy.” Randolph and Baldwin were challenging not only conscription, but the conduct of the military vis-à-vis foreign countries. Randolph, Baldwin, and Manning (if proven guilty) challenge the use of the military as a means to increase the private wealth of the wealthiest class of society. For more on Manning see Charles Jerome Schoch’s “Blood On Their Hands: Media Framing of the Afghan War Diary Leaks,” (Master’s thesis, Wichita State University, 2011).

25 Samson, *The American Fund*, p.17. Baldwin and Randolph’s protest against the World War I was not only in the name of labor organizing but also in the name of anti-imperialism. They both saw the human loss of human lives as an unjustifiable collateral in a war created by the wealthiest class to secure their own profit and more property. However in his editorials in *The Messenger*, Randolph apparently came to see Baldwin as neglecting the class struggle for the cause of white liberalism. In his August 1921 issue, Randolph’s editorial section titled “Sincere But Misled White Friends of the Negro—A Reply to Roger Baldwin” asks ultimately, “Does Mr. Baldwin honestly believe that these corporation lawyers, packing, steel, coal, copper, clothing and banking magnates have not a very clear eye on the class struggle phase of the Urban League?”
that, for an organization like the AFPS that was intended to challenge the status quo, the idea of approaching those foundations “dominated by class interests seemed particularly unimaginative.” She later writes that Charles Garland repeated a desire that the Board refrain from attempting to control the policies of Fund recipients—perhaps in recognition of Baldwin’s well earned reputation for meddling—but he had “no objection to controlling their business practices in the interest of efficiency and economy…As recipients would learn, control of business practices put the camel’s nose in the policy tent.” Baldwin’s nose was in Randolph’s policy tent. Especially as it concerned the amount the AFPS would agree to give The Messenger.

Baldwin applied the high standard of “efficient radicalism” to all publications seeking AFPS funding including The Messenger. Fund recipients were expected to apply rigorous “business conditions in the handling of gifts.” Samson writes that this demand presented an obstacle to applicants whose priority was the achievement of a particular end, education, worker organization, militant action—and not the installation of a bookkeeping system satisfactory to Stuart Chase, who was an accountant that essentially audited The Messenger’s financial records.

The Fund looked for gains in newspapers’ circulation, increases in workers’ education enrollment, and rising support by the enterprises’ constituents to determine whether contributions were producing results. This results oriented approach, known as “efficient radicalism” was based on the Marxist “efficient business practices” model,

26 Samson, The American Fund, p.27.
27 Samson, The American Fund, p. 34.
which contradicted the anti-individualistic socialist ethos that Randolph promoted in
*The Messenger*. Samson writes that most of the board of the directors, especially
Baldwin, agreed with Karl Marx and his philosophy of “efficient radicalism” that
proved to be a formidable criterion for Randolph to pass in order to fund *The Messenger*
Marxism, Cedric Robinson writes, incorporated theoretical and ideological weaknesses
that stemmed from the same social forces that provided the bases of capitalist
formation. One of these weaknesses included denying the capitalistic regularities of
wealth concentration that was initially acquired in the Western hemisphere by the free
labor of enslaved Africans. While Randolph did not stress the origin of African labor as
a negotiating tool to receive more funds from the AFPS, he did stress the common
interest across races of labor organizing. As Baldwin became director of the AFPS, his
denial of capitalistic regularities despite his former anti-capitalist protest of World War
I, became a reality for Randolph. Baldwin in essence became part of the upper class
that he formerly worked against as a union spy. The strict criterion that Randolph

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28 Cedric Robinson’s discussion of Marxism’s weaknesses is most clearly articulated in his explanation of Richard Wright’s and C.L.R. James’ conclusions of Marxism: “Marxist theory [for Wright] was an expression of petit bourgeois consciousness and its critique of bourgeois society and capitalism was most fundamentally addressed to that [bourgeois] class’s [and not the working class’s] suffocation by the authority of the bourgeois ruling class….the critique of capitalism was only the beginning of the struggle for liberation…James would come to the theoretical position that ‘in the decisive hour’ it was only the consciousness and activity of the revolutionary masses that could preserve the revolution from compromise, betrayal, or the ill-considered usurpation of revolutionary authority.”

Roger Baldwin had essentially become part of the ruling bourgeois class that compromised the class struggle that Randolph thought he and Baldwin were part of. Randolph’s correspondence with Baldwin challenged what he saw in Baldwin as his replacing the role of dictator rather than working to fundamentally change the structure of the society that produces more dictators and the desire for them. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1998), p.10, 304-5, 315. Randolph in his July 1922 issue of *The Messenger* called AFPS board of directors member Scott Nearing “the best known white professor in the U.S.” Samson quotes Nearing on the AFPS: “he believed that the Fund was performing too cautiously and that it was a mistake for the Fund to spend itself in nickels and quarters ‘rarely awarding enough to make an enterprise really viable.’ Baldwin’s influence was viable for he had earned fame for his tight fists. No tough man of a bank cage exists than Roger Baldwin, who lived a life framed by Puritan observance of farthings,” *Samson, The American Fund*, p.105.
appealed to in order to fund *The Messenger* is a testament to this. According to Randolph, in applying this criterion of efficient radicalism to *The Messenger*, Baldwin did not account for the myriad ways that the federal government worked to undermine the work of *The Messenger* by intimidation. Baldwin’s criterion of efficient radicalism in *The Messenger*’s fundraising was unrealistic given the climate of racial discrimination that was hostile to African Americans who were reading literature that was encouraging labor organizing.

In his letters to the AFPS, Randolph’s critique of Baldwin’s criterion to receive funds, given their shared labor activist history, was essentially a critique of the Baldwin’s and other white leftists’ uncritical worship of Karl Marx. Given his intense socialist ideology, Randolph’s correspondence with the Fund make them look like gatekeepers suppressing progressive class struggle, or very much like the petit bourgeois class replacing the colonists but maintaining the same system of economic oppression. This “petit-bourgeois revolution” is seen in revolutionary struggles such as the Haitian revolution where the more radical leader Dessalines rejected the petit-bourgeois system of economic oppression that the more celebrated Toussaint L’Ouverture wanted to maintain after ejecting the French colonists. Randolph’s critique of Baldwin’s criterion was also a critique of Baldwin’s conservative retreat to join instead of break the ranks of capital.

In order to receive funds from the AFPS, A. Philip Randolph had to complete a questionnaire by the end of 1922 that detailed his goals as editor of *The Messenger*. The
questionnaire that Randolph and Owen completed provided a history of the organization in order to prove to the AFPS that they were following a strict protocol of money management. Along with this initial audit of their expenses, Chandler Owen in later 1922 wrote to Roger Baldwin, executive secretary of the AFPS, requesting ten thousand dollars “be given as follows: 1. $5,000 immediately and 2. $5,000 to be given on the following conditions: $1,000 for each $250 we raise until the second $5,000 is consumed.”

James Weldon Johnson, who was a member of the board of directors of the AFPS wrote to the Board in support of Randolph and Owen receiving this amount, “even though it may not be given in the sums and upon the terms requested by the applicants.”

Johnson was in a sense challenging Randolph’s audacity to describe the terms the AFPS ought to lend Randolph money. This audacity came from Randolph’s belief that Baldwin’s criterion for receiving funding contravened the class struggle.

Randolph issued Baldwin another letter stating that Baldwin has set up a condition that is impossible to fulfill in order to receive money: “with nothing to work on for getting subscriptions, you ask us to do what you probably asked of no white journal. In view of the foregoing facts we are again presenting our request for a loan if you will not give us five thousand dollars [underlined emphasis in original].” Here Randolph was challenging what Samson calls the criterion of “efficient radicalism.” Samson writes that the board of the AFPS that decided who should be funded, was so imbued with the

30 “Memorandum re Application of The Messenger, from James Weldon Johnson to Roger N. Baldwin,” AFPS Records, Box 22, Reel 10.
“ubiquitous [Marxist] admiration of science and efficiency, they often used it as a primary criterion for deciding who received money.”

Samson writes that the AFPS gave certain groups loans and others grants. Overwhelmingly most of the money the *The Messenger* received from the AFPS was in the form of loans. By the end of 1925, the AFPS still expected $750 from *The Messenger*. By the time Randolph concluded his regular correspondence with Baldwin in 1925, Baldwin wrote to Charles Garland telling him “it is absurd that although we have appointed large amounts the Fund is larger than...when you turned it over to us.”

Baldwin’s thrifty allocation of funds left them with more money by the end of 1925 than they originally received from Garland. Since his correspondence with Randolph, Baldwin has ultimately looked at his funding of *The Messenger* with both wonder and dismay.

Randolph was able to help pay off their debt to the AFPS off through several Black-owned institutions, one of them being the Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company. In an August 1924 letter to F.B. Ransom, the business manager for the Walker Manufacturing Company, Randolph asks Ransom to pay the AFPS $720 instead

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32 Samson, *The American Fund*, p.34.
34 Roger Baldwin told his biographer Peggy Lamson: “if you’re intellectually radical, what do you do about it [?] And I never *did* much about it you know. My ideas were never really backed by my performance. I always *acted* like a liberal [emphases in original]. I always stayed right with the liberal and social work profession. And what I did with the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] would be classified as liberal. But I never joined any radical organization...spending a million or two well is a tough job for anybody and hardest of all for pioneering social causes which may or may not have survival value...I do not feel so satisfied with our record of risks and compromises. We yielded too often to friendship and passing pressures. But wise investment in reform is always chancy: that’s their nature.” Peggy Lamson, *Roger Baldwin, Founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, A Portrait*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), p.125, 144.
of paying it himself “for seven pages of advertisements including art and engraving to the amount of $300 [part of the $720] appearing in the August [1924] issue of the…magazine.”  Randolph was able to secure Ransom’s payment and advertising revenue for the Walker Manufacturing Company, possibly as a result of his wife’s connection to Madame C.J. Walker. Lucille Green Randolph who owned and operated a beauty shop in Harlem for over ten years by 1925 that funded The Messenger, graduated from Howard University and then from the Walker Beauty School, where she learned cosmetology and other skills that would later allow a professional relationship between her husband and the Walker Manufacturing Company. This may explain Randolph’s inability to strictly follow Baldwin’s criterion of producing financial bookkeeping that was “efficiently radical.” He knew he could count on other sources of funding for The Messenger in a clandestine way like the Walker Manufacturing Company who benefited from having their company advertised in a paper that appreciated a steady circulation.

By June of 1925, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn wrote to Chase asking him to discontinue services to The Messenger, “because they have apparently swung so far away from their original purpose that it is a question whether they will still come within the scope of the kind of periodicals which this Fund is interested in

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supporting.” She wrote that the AFPS Board of Directors “feels its rather futile to continue furnishing them with expert advice which they do not seem inclined to follow.”

The AFPS’ critique of the content of The Messenger is interesting in light of the fact that June 1925 was the same month that, because of his role as editor of The Messenger, Randolph was approached by Ashley Totten, a Pullman porter, to lead a labor union of Pullman porters that would later become the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Totten was motivated to ask Randolph about leading this union only after reading the periodical edited by Randolph and supported in part by the AFPS, evidenced by his correspondence with them. Where Flynn and the AFPS saw Randolph’s content of The Messenger as threatening, Ashley Totten saw it as inviting and supportive of a labor organization intended only for Pullman porters. FROM 1925 TO 1928, THE MESSENGER BECOMES A KEY ORGANIZING TOOL FOR RECRUITMENT OF PULLMAN PORTERS INTO THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS. SEE DIAGRAM OF PORTERS FROM THE MESSENGER.

In the very last issue of The Messenger, Randolph returns to his editorial ideology of encouraging labor organizing by dispelling the myth of the Negro scab. In an article he prints by A.W. Johnson about the coal miners strike in Appalachia: “Reports show that the Negro miner who is usually imported from the southern cotton fields and who in many cases know nothing about a strike being on refuses to stay in the scab mine for

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any length of time, and does not so easily submit to the miserable conditions existing in
the scab mines.” In this final issue Randolph resumes his critique of capitalism when
he relates his own battles with Pullman to the practice of wealthy capitalists who expect
their economic power to prevail: “capitalists know that if they can get rid of the union
leaders who are familiar with the facts and cognizant of all the sharp practices and
artifices of the capitalists, it will be much easier to destroy the union.” Randolph
attacks the argument that he is an outsider because he is a labor leader or perceived to
be a socialist. Instead he inverts that argument, saying Pullman management and other
heads of capitalist organizations are the real outsiders that workers have to contend
with. He finally beseeches his readers to “investigate the merits and methods of
consumer cooperation. The Co-Operative League of America, 167 West 12th Street,
New York City, will gladly furnish information.” On the issue of the strike, Randolph
talked with Edwin Morrow on June 4th about the Emergency Board, and according to
Harris, Morrow informed him that the union must first set a date for the strike.
According to Harris: “it was then that Randolph, frustrated and angered at the apparent
run-around on the part of the board, impulsively and unilaterally decided to announce
that the union would strike Pullman at noon on June 8.” After receiving a telegram
from William Green, the president of the American Federation of Labor, that
disapproved of striking, on the morning of June 8th, Randolph decided to call off the
strike. Randolph wrote to the Mediation board by the end of this month: “may I say

41 Harris, Keeping the Faith, p.110.
42 Harris, Keeping the Faith, p.110.
that your decision is not calculated to increase the respect of Negro American citizens for the spirit of fair play of Government agencies where their interests are involved.”

However some had critiqued Randolph’s own decision in not being more forceful in sticking to a strike date, and admitting some level of a lack of support for a strike in the Brotherhood.

Randolph ended his final issue with a critique of both candidates of mainstream parties in typical Randolph fashion:

Neither one [Hoover and Smith] can do much of anything to alter the status of the Negro, if elected. If Hoover gets in it will not make a particle of difference to the eight million Negroes in the South, even if he is a Republican. The Grand Old Party in its eight years of rule has done nothing toward enforcing the 14th and 15th Amendments to say nothing of the 1st, and there is no reason for believing that the Democrats will do otherwise if they get into office.

Randolph ended his editorship of The Messenger critiquing the two party mainstream and also Robert Vann editor of the Pittsburgh Courier for his article “Is Randolph to Resign,” that was meant to discredit Randolph’s leadership. Randolph engages each of Vann’s critique and concludes that he is disqualified from being an adviser to the porters because of his latecoming, misguided attacks. Vann’s biographer Andrew Buni writes that Vann was compensated some way by Pullman to slander Randolph at this time. This speaks to Randolph’s extraordinary editorial vision that

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43 Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p.203.
saw him inspiring his readers to become more critically thinking voters, citizen lobbyists, anti-imperialists, and labor organizers. He also expressed this vision for a more anti-racist world in the fiction he wrote.