

**Stanley Grizzle:** Continuation of interview with Clarence Coleman, 15th of December '87 in Ottawa. So you're-you're to-- evaluating Randolph's leadership.

**Clarence Coleman:** Yeah. Well, in my opinion, he was one of the greatest union leaders in the history of the United States and Canada.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** He was internationally known and internationally recognized.

**Stanley:** All right. What do you think of the leadership of Bennie Smith?

**Clarence:** Well, Bennie Smith was a loyal supporter-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -of A. Philip Randolph.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. And Blanchette?

**Clarence:** Blanchette? They're all supporters-

**Stanley:** All right.

**Clarence:** -and was an able- and was an able supporter also.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. The two persons' names who came up, uh, the odd time, uh, as to whether or not they did any organizing of porters, and I'm wondering if you can give me your opinion. Do you know if Charlie Bald-- Charles Baldwin of Toronto was an organizer?

**Clarence:** No, I don't.

**Stanley:** You don't know him?

**Clarence:** I don't know any Charles Baldwin.

**Stanley:** How about, uh, Harry Gairey? Was he an organizer?

**Clarence:** Well, I only heard about him. He was a vice-- Stanley Grizzle was a vice president of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters out of Toronto that I was acquainted with.

**Stanley:** Oh, but you don't know about organizing, um, done by the two men that I've named?

**Clarence:** No, no.

**Stanley:** All right. Um, what did you think of, getting back to porter, what did you think of the practice of tipping?

**Clarence:** The practice of tipping?

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** It was good because it was, uh, subsidizing a porter's salary.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. But did-did do you think it did anything to affect the dignity of the porter?

**Clarence:** Oh, I don't think it did. I mean, you'll take, uh, tips, well, see, I can't- I can't think the same thing because I worked in hotels before I came to the railroad-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -and I-- well, we used to take being tipped as waiters-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -and as bartenders. I mean, I worked at the country club as a caddie, and I was used to getting tips.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** Because we didn't really charge for when we was caddies, we just got tips for carrying bags and we got tips for working in the- in the dining room.

**Stanley:** Mm.

**Clarence:** So I-I've been used to tips. Tips is, uh, another I think the-the English word for that is T-I-P, tip, is to ensure promptness.

**Stanley:** To Insure Prompt Services; TIPS. Uh, there were White porters on the-- in the Montreal division. Uh, the question is did the White-- there were White porters, can you confirm?

**Clarence:** There was White porters there, but after-- uh, there wasn't White porters when I first came to Canada, there were only Black porters when I first came-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -then the White porters came in afterwards.

**Stanley:** Do you remember then the most-- the largest number of W-White porters you had in Montreal?

**Clarence:** Well, we had, uh, out of Montreal division, we had, uh, maybe 14 or 15 White porters.

**Stanley:** What was their attitude towards the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Clarence:** Oh, we got along with them fine.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** 'Cause I mean, we was more or less in charge at the time, they were just workers.

**Stanley:** But you found that they supported the Brotherhood or did you not?

**Clarence:** Oh yes. Well, they were there, they was checked off anyway, whether they supported or not, but they-- we had, uh, two or three that would, uh, come to meetings.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Can you recall any nicknames of porters to share?

**Clarence:** Any nicknames of porter?

**Stanley:** Yes. I heard some humorous nicknames which I'm trying to add to the book to add a little light touch in spots, you know.

**Clarence:** [laughs] Well, they called me Preacher Coleman.

**Stanley:** And why did they call you Preacher Coleman?

**Clarence:** Because I-- well, I guess I was preaching most of the time because-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -I practiced, uh, on the railroad-- because I came from the sem-seminary, and uh, I had those sermons prepared sometimes in my head and-

**Stanley:** Mm.

**Clarence:** -I would just use them on the-the porters.

**Stanley:** I really enjoyed them too. [laughter]

**Stanley:** Yeah, I wish you were around in Toronto. Um, how about an anecdote? Anything in particularly humorous or memorable that happened to you as a porter in the railroad or to anyone else that you can recall?

**Clarence:** Oh, well, I mean, I've said some of the things and I met Dr. and Mrs. Littlefield from California, uh--

**Stanley:** Who was that?

**Clarence:** Dr. and Mrs. Littlefield, they was traveling in Canada.

**Stanley:** Who-who are they?

**Clarence:** They were just passengers.

**Stanley:** Oh, I thought they-- All right.

**Clarence:** Just passengers-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** But these was the-the things that I-I can remember-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -it happened to me that, uh, after I met them, every year after I met them at Christmas time like coming up to the season like now, I got a Christmas card and a gift for about nine straight years.

**Stanley:** Is that right?

**Clarence:** Dr. and Mrs. Littlefield.

**Stanley:** Oh, the wife of a--

**Clarence:** And I used to get Mrs. George Perciel from Vancouver for the Little Theaters.

**Stanley:** What's her name? Mrs. George what?

**Clarence:** Perciel.

**Stanley:** Perciel?

**Clarence:** Yeah, Perciel.

**Stanley:** How do you spell that?

**Clarence:** P-E-R-C-I-E-L, I think, Perciel. She was with the Little Theaters-

**Stanley:** Oh.

**Clarence:** -and she used to travel across the country and she used to wait for the day that I would come in to get on a train and come into-- cross to, uh-

**Stanley:** All right.

**Clarence:** -to Montreal.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** I think they-they still live in, uh, in Vancouver.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Clarence:** She was with Little Theaters.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. Getting back to ti-- back to tips, what was the largest tip you ever received?

**Clarence:** Well, Mr. Fox and Mr. Miner of, uh, what-what paper-- at Fort William-- out of Fort William, before I forget what paper company is that. Uh, Mr. Fox gave me-- he was

president of the For-- I think in the Fort William Paper Company, but for Christmas, that's when I was working on the bar-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -and Mr. Fox gave me \$50, a \$50 bill, as a tip, and Mr. Miner gave me \$20 as a tip for Christmas.

**Stanley:** And how long did you have them on the train?

**Clarence:** Well, I'd have them from Fort William to Montreal. They get on at Fort William.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Would you like to make a concluding statement about the- uh, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters? Your impressions or comments or observations about the-the union?

**Clarence:** Well, for me, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was one of the best things that happened to the porters in Canada.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Clarence:** It gave them dignity, it gave them some rights more than they were, that they had, some privileges-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm

**Clarence:** -and improved their salary. Their working condition was improved-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -and I think the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was also an asset to the Canadian Pacific. Even though they was union, but they made them-- made-made the men better.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Oh, yes, getting back to the conventions, you think you went to St. Louis convention. How many conventions did you attend of the Brotherhood?

**Clarence:** Well, the-the wo-- international conventions-

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Clarence:** -that was in St. Louis, Missouri?

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** That was in 1950-'58, I believe.

**Stanley:** That's the only one you attended?

**Clarence:** That's the only international convention I attended-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -yeah.

**Stanley:** Do you have any proceedings of-of any conventions at all? You know, the pro-- the booklet or book?

**Clarence:** No, I don't have it. That-that was what Marcus Dash had the proceeding cause he was the secretary and treasurer.

**Stanley:** Yeah, mm, mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** And I-- when I left- when I left the-the-the railroad and also resigned from the Brotherhood-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -I left Joseph Sealey. Joseph Sealey was the next president because he was my vice president.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. All right. Thank you, brother Coleman, for your very, uh, interesting answers to these questions.

**[00:09:44] [END OF AUDIO]**