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# Citizenship, Self-Respect, and Political Power: Chicago's Flat Janitors Trailblaze the Service Employees International Union, 1912-1921\*

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Around World War I, a janitor who oversaw buildings with apartments, or "flats," functioned as a menial laborer and a live-in house servant. As a laborer the janitor shoveled coal into the boiler and took the ashes out, disposed of both the ashes and the tenants' garbage, mopped and cleaned vestibules and windows, pounded nails, sawed boards, painted halls and woodwork, fixed pipes, planted trees, trimmed shrubs, and cleared the snow. The janitor also had to be a manager and mediator as well as a jack-of-all-trades. He had to keep the building warm enough for the tenants, who sometimes left the windows open, while pleasing the owner by not burning too much coal. He also had to enforce rules, such as on the use of the laundry room, against tenants who considered themselves his boss. As a live-in servant the janitor was constantly at the beck and call, not only of his boss, but also of the tenants. Not pleasing any of them could lead to

dismissal, which meant losing his home as well as his job. Despite the many and constant demands on him, the janitor was paid so little that he had to service several buildings to sustain his family. Like a servant, he was paid partly with living quarters, which were in the dank basement, often near to the boiler.<sup>1</sup>

These debasing living and working conditions led the Chicago flat janitors to organize in 1902. The janitors' first effort was part of a huge and successful city-wide organizing campaign sponsored by the Chicago Federation of Labor. Within three years, however, the janitors' locals collapsed amidst employer opposition and corruption in a new international union that had been formed in 1904. The janitors started organizing again in 1912 under the leadership of William F. Quesse, a former janitor who had been raised in an Illinois farming village by his German immigrant parents. A veteran of the first organizing campaign, Quesse led his new flat janitors' union into affiliation with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in October, 1912, as Federal Union 14332. Federal unions were a special category of locals created by the AFL for organizations of unskilled workers, in contrast to the craftsmen who predominated in its membership. In January 1917, after four and one half years of grueling effort, the Chicago Flat Janitors' Union won a city-wide contract negotiated with the city's real estate board. At the time of this victory Local 14332 had around 6,000 members. The new contract gave the union increased wages, better working conditions, and, most important, a closed shop. One union local had gained control of the Chicago labor market in janitors for apartment buildings.<sup>2</sup>

Local 14332 went on to form the core of a new international union. In April 1921, thirteen union leaders from Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Boston, and Seattle met in Washington, DC, to found the Building Service Employees International Union, the predecessor of the SEIU. The members in their seven locals were more than janitors and elevator operators: they were men and women, blacks and whites, immigrants and native-born. The Chicago Flat Janitors, for example—a local of white and black men—supported the organization of women, including the Chicago “janitresses” represented at the 1921 meeting by Elizabeth Grady. The local's distinctive organizing policy and the solidarity among its diverse members gave it substantial political power in Chicago.

Under Quesse's leadership the union quickly translated this economic power into political influence with Mayor "Big Bill" Thompson's Republican organization, the most influential political force in the city through the next decade. The union was especially well suited to politics in Chicago, where neighborhoods of ethnics and blacks formed the building blocks of power. Spread throughout the city's residential areas, the union's thousands of members could double as precinct workers for political friends. The political influence of the Flat Janitors' Union helped it stand out from a common pattern of the contemporary American labor movement. Most unions had made substantial gains during World War I, but lost them again in peacetime during a period of political reaction and business counterattack, most notably during 1919. The Chicago Flat Janitors' Union kept its wartime gains with the aid of the Thompson organization, which, among other things, helped insure that the arbitrators of the union's annual contracts had a sympathetic ear for labor.<sup>3</sup>

Central to the Flat Janitors' political power was the transformation of the membership, particularly after the 1917 contract. The union's members could be a powerful political force, as they talked to tenants and neighbors, put up signs, passed out petitions, served at polling stations, or argued with friends at local bars. Yet they could take such actions only if they were disciplined enough to follow their leaders, if they had the self-confidence to assert themselves with people who considered themselves superior, such as the tenants and owners, and if they had the energy and commitment to do this political work in addition to their jobs.

Menials in the eyes of society, the janitors had by no means always possessed such qualities. Around the time of the 1917 contract, Chicago had over 9,000 male janitors: 62 percent were white immigrants, and another 20 percent were blacks. An additional 10 percent were native-born white ethnics with at least one parent born abroad.<sup>4</sup> The proportion of immigrants reflected the fact that the greatest immigration wave in American history had just ended in 1914 when war shut down Europe's borders. Typically, poor people of such low status were politically passive, lacking the interest and self-confidence required for sustained political involvement. Recently arrived and probably not naturalized yet, most of the immigrant

janitors likely could not vote in 1917. Nevertheless, the Flat Janitors' Union managed to unite a majority of these men into one huge interracial local and instill in them enough self-esteem and discipline to make them a potent political power. The fact that the leaders' ethnic and racial background reflected that of the members helped them considerably in promoting this transformation. The leaders were about equally divided between native- and foreign-born whites, combined with blacks in almost the same proportion as the black percentage of male janitors.<sup>5</sup> These men knew personally the experiences of their respective groups. Their being union leaders also made them examples of men who had power, who had "made it," and thus who had the authority to instruct others in how to work, live, and act in an urban society new to most of the members. Sons of immigrants such as Quesse were often migrants to the city from farming villages in the Midwest, and many African Americans had left sharecropping in the South to seek a better life in the urban North. Through the union these newcomers to urban America managed to make the city work for them, most importantly, by winning the 1917 contract.

This was the union's first city-wide agreement negotiated with the Chicago Board of Real Estate, and its affiliated organizations. That contract raised wages an average of 7 percent and made numerous changes in the working conditions of janitors. The enforcement of the contract gave janitors a sense that their lives could actually change. It also required them to reevaluate who they were and how they conducted their own lives.

The enforcement of the 1917 contract required each janitor to assume a new and higher level of personal responsibility. Dispersed at scattered work sites throughout the city, janitors were not concentrated together on shop floors in large industrial enterprises where union stewards were available to intervene when the contract was violated. Each janitor was the first person to confront his employer when contract problems arose. One building owner expressed his anger when his janitor took this responsibility upon himself: "I asked the janitor to fasten a board which had become loose from the back porch. He informed me that the Janitor's Union would not allow him to drive a nail into a board . . . but that I was obliged to call on the Carpenter's Union for a man, which of course I did not do, as I got a hammer and nails and fixed it myself."<sup>6</sup> The janitor simply

followed the standards in the labor agreement. In countless similar personal encounters the members of Flat Janitor's Local 14332 saw themselves in a new light, reflected in often angry eyes of employers and tenants who had to learn new ways of dealing with union members, whose actions violated the status their betters assigned to them. The anger the unionists provoked was evident in the letter of another building owner to the Governor: "As you know Governor, the janitors never received any gold medals for mentality and never will. They seem to possess a vindictiveness, not all, but most of them, that is entirely uncalled for."<sup>7</sup> Another owner complained that janitors were "not amenable to reason during the Quesse regime."<sup>8</sup>

What these owners saw as vindictive and unreasonable, the union viewed as positive self-assertion. In Quesse's words, after the 1917 contract the members began "teaching one another." They taught each other how to be better janitors, and thus more of an asset to themselves and their employers; how to live in a "clean" way, including buying insurance for their families; and, most important, how to act like "gentlemen," who "do business in a courteous manner and expect to have some courtesy shown in return whenever they meet gentlemen."<sup>9</sup> For years Quesse had been trying to teach the janitors self-respect; without it he knew that they could not respect each other, or be good union members. Then the 1917 victory taught them better than any words could do. One result was that hundreds of new members joined at each meeting. These new men, as well as the existing membership, were expected to be "a better class of workmen." As such they could give and receive the respect they cherished. They were also more likely to be the politically active "respectable citizens" Quesse desired.<sup>10</sup>

To demonstrate responsible citizenship Quesse wanted to do more than ensure sanitary living conditions for janitors; he also wanted to eliminate public health hazards such as outdoor privies. The union went beyond advocacy to work with public authorities in reducing the "smoke menace" that polluted the air and people's lungs. Quesse testified before various public boards and committees about how building ordinances should require healthier building design and how building owners and janitors could cooperate to reduce smoke pollution by burning coal more efficiently. All these activities advanced

both the public image of janitorial work and the janitors' own self-respect.<sup>11</sup>

World War I contributed to this transformation of the janitors, and it had an especially profound impact on immigrants. Typically, immigrant workers moved around constantly, from job to job and place to place, or "floated," to use the term of a contemporary government report.<sup>12</sup> Although all unskilled workers floated, immigrants did so even more; and the transiency among the janitors made them especially difficult to organize. In 1915, before the United States entered World War I, the union had temporarily been expelled from the AFL for not regularly submitting monthly reports on its membership: the union protested that it was too expensive to track down its members each month because they moved around so much.<sup>13</sup>

Now, after America declared war in April 1917, some of the immigrant janitors had sons and brothers fighting for their new country. Like all workers, they were exhorted by the government to work harder than ever to help defeat the enemy. As a result, most immigrants, including the immigrant majority within the Flat Janitors' Union, began to feel like patriotic Americans, not foreigners, or "aliens," to use the evocative legal term for their status. Local 14332 energetically promoted this process of "Americanization."

During the War the union insisted that "every member must be an American Citizen or . . . must immediately take out his first papers" declaring his intent to become one.<sup>14</sup> The union actively promoted the sale of Liberty Bonds and bragged that every member had purchased at least one. Throughout Chicago's ethnic communities purchasing these bonds made many feel as if they were literally buying a piece of America.<sup>15</sup> The Flat Janitors' Union also promoted Americanization with special campaigns to promote the war effort: it encouraged janitors to burn coal more efficiently, for example, to help counteract the wartime fuel shortage.<sup>16</sup>

To drive home the message of citizenship and patriotism the union insured that at all its meetings "our membership are [sic] taught to respect the principles of liberty and the ideals upon which our Government is founded." The union easily linked these principles and ideals--articulated in the war to "make the world safe for democracy"--with its own endeavor to "gain a little democracy in the field wherein



we earned our livelihood."<sup>17</sup> Buying bonds and contributing to the war effort helped the immigrant janitors settle down and become citizens, voters, and trade unionists. For Chicago's janitors, as for the city's steel and packinghouse workers, the war effort taught them lessons about themselves and democracy that they tried to apply when the war ended.

The 1917 contract victory—just three months prior to the nation's declaration of war-- contributed to their Americanization by making their jobs more desirable, and thus decreasing their frequent moves. That contract also taught democratic values effectively by relating them to concrete goals, such as higher wages, shorter hours, and decent conditions. The Flat Janitors' Union as well as the AFL summed up these goals as an "American standard" of living, which during the War became both a union ideal and a patriotic duty.<sup>18</sup> Trade unionists began to believe that producing for the war effort and fighting for an American standard of living were part of the same collective endeavor.

The impact of World War I on the black janitors was different, but also profound. Blacks were already Americans of long pedigree and harsh experience; they were also likely to have been janitors longer than the immigrants. As a service job, janitor's work was one of the few niches in the labor market where they could find employment in Chicago. Thus it is no surprise that in 1910, when blacks constituted 2 percent of Chicago's population, they made up 20 percent of the male janitors.<sup>19</sup> Since janitor's work was one of the limited available options, black men kept the job if they could. They probably remained in the jobs longer than the immigrants, at least before World War I.

By 1916 black migrants streamed north out of the rural South. The conflict overseas stopped the supply of cheap immigrant labor, while wartime economic expansion increased the need for workers. Chicago's black population increased 150 percent between 1910 and 1920, compared to 46 percent in the previous decade.<sup>20</sup> The great proportion of the new black migrants went to work, not in the service sector as before, but in the booming industrial economy--in the steel mills, foundries, and packinghouses.<sup>21</sup>

The black janitors' relative permanence in janitorial work limited the number of jobs available in this area for the new arrivals.



Nevertheless, the newcomers who did become janitors joined a solid core of blacks who were already veterans of both city life and janitorial work. The newcomers also joined a dynamic and politicized black community in Chicago that had already begun electing some of its own to office. Black Chicago was a critical element in Mayor Thompson's Republican organization: before the New Deal blacks overwhelmingly supported the Party of Lincoln and Emancipation. Then, as segregation funneled the wartime migration into the city's dense Black Belt, black Chicago became even more politically potent. World War I aided the political mobilization of the Black Belt, as black troops fought in Europe for universal values grossly violated for blacks in the United States. World War I, and the migration it initiated, helped stimulate a political awakening in black Chicago, just as it had in the city's immigrant communities.<sup>22</sup>

The migrant janitors from the South looked to the veteran black janitors for guidance and leadership, and the veterans gained in prestige within the union as a result. The experienced black janitors seized the opportunities for leadership when Quesse called for one huge local without prejudice against any of its numerous constituent groups. In 1916 Quesse said, "We . . . are composed of all creeds, colors and nationalities, and do not allow anyone to use any prejudice in the organization against each other, for when we first organized we had everything in our organization from an ex-bank cashier to a common laborer."<sup>23</sup> To reach this moral high ground Quesse may have drawn on his strong Roman Catholicism as well as labor's version of Americanism, which stressed cultural pluralism, at least for people of European background, as an organizing necessity and moral value.<sup>24</sup> He knew as well that unorganized blacks could easily replace unskilled white janitors, who in turn could form the constituency for a rival janitors' local. The Flat Janitors opposed a separate black local, as well as any other organization it considered a rival.<sup>25</sup> For whatever mixture of reasons, the union's racial and ethnic policies opened doors. By 1919 black janitors filled the vice-presidency of the union and three seats on its nine member executive board.<sup>26</sup>

The racial policies of the Flat Janitors' Union contrasted starkly with race relations both in the city and in most unions. In the summer of 1919--just over six months after the War ended--Chicago experienced the worst race riot in its history. The massive migration of

blacks out of the South combined with unemployment and inflation after World War I to create a volatile racial situation. The city exploded when a black youth was killed as he swam into a white area of a beach on Lake Michigan. Following five days of battles in the streets, 23 blacks and 15 whites lay dead; and over 500 people were injured.<sup>27</sup> The governor established the Chicago Commission on Race Relations in 1920 to investigate the riot. Wide-ranging in its scope, that Commission's report included an analysis of the position of blacks in Chicago trade unions.

The Commission counted 399 labor organizations in Chicago; only the Flat Janitors, the Butcher Workmen, the Hod Carriers, and the International Ladies' Garment Workers organized blacks and whites into the same locals. The Chicago Flat Janitors' Union, with about 1,000 black members, contained over 8 percent of all black trade unionists in the city. One of the Commission's investigators interviewed the union's leaders and attended a meeting of the membership, where he was intrigued by the easy social intercourse among the races. He was also impressed that a vice-president and three members of the executive board were black, while several more were stewards and delegates to the Chicago Federation of Labor. The vice-president was Seymour Miller, who had held that position since 1916.<sup>28</sup>

The Commission's investigator noted that unions excluding blacks often argued that white members objected to "close physical contact" between the races, especially in meetings involving "some element of ritual." This aversion was not apparent at the meeting of Local 14332 attended by the Commission's investigator: "New pass words were given out, and all members, white and Negro, had to come before the Negro vice-president, who whispered the words to each and they in turn repeated them to him. Not the slightest hesitancy was noted on the part of the white members, but rather a hearty handshake or a slap on the back seemed to be the rule. . . . At this meeting, packed to standing-room and attended by well over a thousand members, Negroes were a large percentage of those present. These were not confined to a group by themselves, but were scattered in all parts of the hall and seemed to be in cordial conversation with the white members."<sup>29</sup> This was an example of the solidarity that grew out of the class experience of janitors shaped so

profoundly by the 1917 labor agreement and World War I. These men identified themselves not only as members of different races but also as patriotic union janitors, and they were reminded of who they were every time they acted to enforce the contract. This is evident in an early 1920s conflict between the Flat Janitors and building owner Glenwood Preble.<sup>30</sup> When Preble employed "an old negro [sic] and paid him all he asked which was all that he was worth," the union stepped in. Preble's private arrangement with the janitor violated the city-wide labor agreement between the Board of Real Estate and the union. When Preble went to speak to Quesse, the union president "pre-emptorily [sic] assessed a fine against me." The fine was for \$300—the back wages due the "old negro" from the time of his hiring according to the terms of the labor agreement. Preble resented the fine and his loss of power, blaming it on the union, although he himself belonged to the Board of Real Estate, a party to the contract. One can only imagine what the "old negro" janitor thought about the whole affair, but it is clear that his wages went up and he was less at the mercy of his employer. In experiences like these the members learned that they were union janitors, as well as black men, or Germans, or Swedes. They also learned that the union could change their lives.

Although Quesse preached against prejudice among the members, it was only because of this distinctive and common class experience, and the solidarity it brought, that the janitors actually listened to him. His task was made easier because there were really no gradations among flat janitors: the various groups could not fight over who got the highest status jobs.<sup>31</sup> Racial and ethnic prejudice did not disappear, of course. The investigator from the Commission on Race Relations noted, for example, that the Austrians and Belgians "seemed to feel that whenever a janitor died or left the job, or an assistant or helper was needed, such job should always be filled with members of their own nationality." While racial prejudice and group chauvinism persisted, the combination of the leadership's opposition to it and the common class experience of the members allowed the union to contain it.<sup>32</sup>

The way the Flat Janitors' Union handled racism and ethnic chauvinism illustrates more than its leadership's ability to build the solidarity necessary for economic and political power; it also reveals a creative use of popular culture, particularly fraternalism, to help build

a new type of organization distinctive of the World War I era and the 1920s. Much more prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than today, fraternal orders were well known to both immigrants and African Americans, including members of the Flat Janitors' Union.<sup>33</sup> The use of fraternal ritual shows how the union incorporated fraternalism into its own culture, but expanded it across the usual limits of race and ethnicity. The use of fraternalism gave Local 14332 some of the qualities of a male fraternal order--group loyalty against outsiders, secret passwords and rituals, easy social intercourse among the initiated. As a result, the union felt like a family to its members, while, for the same reason, people on the outside frequently experienced it as a sinister and secret combination. Although such fraternal practices had long been part of American labor unions, the racial and ethnic inclusiveness of the Flat Janitors' Union created something new out of them.

The Flat Janitors' Union was comparable to other newer types of association that Americans were building in the 1920s. Several historians have noted that Americans in general and workers in particular were forming organizations with bonds of loyalty based on wider associations than they had previously.<sup>34</sup> Rather than limiting their groups to narrow networks of kin or fellow countrymen in the same places, they formed bonds based on occupation, gender, professional affiliation, or combinations of these and many other qualities. Changes in the economy fostered these new affiliations. Women who worked in huge departments of electrical companies, for example, began to think of themselves as female workers, not simply as members of particular families, ethnic groups, or religious congregations. Chicago's union janitresses did the same. For women, bonds of this type were new.

The waitresses union in Chicago illustrated this phenomenon among women in an occupation with many similarities to the janitors. The janitors' support for the organizing efforts of the waitresses acknowledged their similarity.<sup>35</sup> Like the flat janitors, waitresses were unskilled workers of lowly status who had numerous, usually small, employers spread throughout the city. Similar to the janitors, the waitresses' union fought for a closed shop and work rules that would define their occupation as a specialized trade. The union waitresses could not prepare food or clean up, just as union janitors could not do

carpentry or painting. Such rules were not only designed to prevent jurisdictional disputes with other unions but also to elevate the status of union work in the eyes of both the members and the employers. While controlling who could work in their industries, both unions took responsibility for guaranteeing the quality of the work performed by their members. A historian of the waitresses' unions, Dorothy Sue Cobble, has coined the term "occupational unionism" to define the waitresses' brand of organization, distinguishing it from the unions of both craftsmen and workers in mass production industries.<sup>36</sup> The occupational unionism of the waitresses and the flat janitors exemplified a distinctive organizational phenomenon of the 1920s, in which some Americans built more broadly-based associations than they had previously. The experience of the janitors with fraternalism shows how these organizations could use popular culture to sustain themselves.

The culture of the Flat Janitors' Union was a creative adaptation of tradition to meet the special needs of the members. To unite men across racial and ethnic lines the leaders drew on AFL trade unionism, American political culture, the ideology of the American war effort, fraternal ritual, and perhaps the ideals of Quesse's Catholicism. Their task was especially difficult because of the members' dispersal across the city and isolation from each other in small work sites. The leaders could not rely on the enforced collectivism of huge industrial facilities to show the members what they did in common. Instead they emphasized the political import of union membership. Politics became the common ground where the members saw what they could do together.

Quesse and the other leaders struggled to make the work of janitors into a special trade in a way analogous to Cobble's description of the waitresses' union. Yet the janitors' vision was broader, encompassing politics as well as economics: their leaders always defined union membership in the larger political framework of respectable citizenship. Citizenship was first of all a political category defining membership in a body politic. The union's efforts to improve the public status of janitors made this membership in the political community specific and negotiable: if the janitors made these contributions to the public health and welfare, what could they expect in return? The ultimate form of respect that Quesse wanted for himself

and his members came from others in the Chicago political community, respect not only for the quality of their work but also for their contribution to making the city more livable. Like the middle-class progressive reformers so common in the early twentieth century, the Chicago Flat Janitors' Union wanted a cleaner, healthier city; and its members actually did much of the work to make it so. For the Chicago Flat Janitors trade unionism, solidarity, and politics were inseparable.

## Endnotes

*Note: The yearbooks of the Chicago Flat Janitors' Union, as well as its journal Public Safety, are in the archives of Local 1, SEIU, located in the Walter Reuther Archives at Wayne State University in Detroit.*

- 1 The classic statement of the conditions under which the janitors lived and worked is [William F. Quesse], "History of the Organization: Why and How the Flat Janitors of Chicago, Illinois Were Organized," in Official Year Book (1916) (Chicago: Chicago Flat Janitors' Union Local No. 14332, 1916), Archives, Local 1, n.p.; Chicago, Department of Health, Chicago School of Sanitary Instruction, Bulletin 8, no. 3 (New Series; January 17, 1914): 12.
  - 2 On the early history of the union, as well as background on William F. Quesse, see Tom Beadling, Pat Cooper, and Grace Palladino, A Need for Valor: The Roots of the Service Employees International Union 1902-1980 (Washington, D.C.: Service Employees International Union (SEIU), n.d.), 3-16; and SEIU: The Early Years (Washington, D.C.: SEIU, 1996), video.
- This estimate of the membership is based on extrapolations from the federal censuses of 1910 and 1920 combined with [Quesse], "History of the Organization," Official Yearbook (1916), n.p.; Frank Morrison to John Fitzpatrick, 1 September 1917, Chicago Federation of Labor Papers, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CFL Papers), box 6, folder 41.
- 3 SEIU: The Early Years.
  - 4 Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States (1920), vol. 4: Population 1920. Occupations (Washington: GPO, 1923), 1079.
  - 5 In 1919 and 1920 the same 13 men were officers, trustees, or members of the executive board of local 14332. The birthplaces of 10 could be determined: 4 were foreign-born whites; 4 were native-born whites, and 2 were native-born blacks. One of the native-born whites, Quesse had German-born parents.



- 6 John A. Bowman to Len Small, 11 January 1924, Record Series 403.2, Illinois State Archives (hereafter Pardon Hearings).
  - 7 James J. Harrington to Len Small, 11 January 1924, Pardon Hearings.
  - 8 Cornelius Teninga to Len Small, 11 January 1924, Pardon hearings.
  - 9 [William F. Quesse], "History of the Organization: Why and How the Flat Janitors of Chicago, Illinois were Organized," 1919 Official Year Book (Chicago: The Star Printing Co., 1919), 33.
  - 10 [Quesse], "History of the Organization," Official Year Book (1916), n.p.
  - 11 On self-respect and citizenship in Local 14332, as well as Quesse's testifying, see speech of William Hale Thompson, Federation News, 26 February 1927; "William F. Quesse With His Stub Pencil and a Pad of Paper," Public Safety 3, no. 15 (July 1931): 11-13, 24-26; Beadling, et al., 15.
- On the whole subject of workers' self-perceptions, citizenship, and politics see David Montgomery, *Citizen Worker: The Experience of Workers in the United States with Democracy and the Free Market During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 996-1020.
- 12 United States Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 18: Immigrants in Industries, Part 22: "The Floating Immigrant Labor Supply" (Washington: GPO, 1911).
  - 13 All of the following are in the CFL Papers: William F. Quesse and C. R. Rowens to "Gentlemen" at AFL Headquarters, 27 January 1915, box 3, folder 18; Frank Morrison to John Fitzpatrick, 21 May 1915, box 3, folder 22; John Fitzpatrick to Frank Morrison, 27 May 1915, box 3, folder 22; Frank Morrison to John Fitzpatrick, 23 June 1915, box 3, folder 23.
  - 14 William F. Quesse, "The Past Year," 1919 Official Year Book, 37.
  - 15 David Brody, *Steel Workers in America: The Nonunion Era* (Harper Torchbooks; New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 190-97; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 76-79.
  - 16 Quesse, "The Past Year," 1919 Official Year Book, 37.
  - 17 Ibid., 35, 37.



- 18 Chicago Flat Janitors' Union Local 14332, printed flyer, CFL papers, box 6, folder 47; quotations in this paragraph are from Quesse, "The Past Year," 1919 Official Year Book, 35, 37. On the War and Americanization see Brody, 220-24; Barrett, 1009-10.
- 19 Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States (1910), Abstract of the Census (Washington: GPO, 1913), 95; Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States (1910), vol. 4: Population 1910; Occupational Statistics (Washington: GPO, 1914), 546.
- 20 Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census (1910), Abstract, 95; Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920 (Washington: GPO, 1923), 108.
- 21 James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 184.
- 22 Ibid., 123-27, 176-77; Charles Russell Branham, "The Transformation of Black Political Leadership in Chicago, 1864-1942" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1981), 159, 179.
- 23 [Quesse], "History of the Organization" Official Year Book (1916), n.p.
- 24 On labors cultural pluralism see Barrett, 1010; this cultural pluralism usually stopped at Asians and blacks. On Quesse's Catholicism see the speech of Father Malloy, *Federation News* (Chicago), 26 February 1927.
- 25 The union opposed a purported benefit society that it considered a surreptitious rival union; see Circuit Court of Cook County, Bill for Injunction, *George Gough v. Chicago Flat Janitors' Union*, case No. 15C014238, September 1915, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Archives, Chicago, Illinois. The union also opposed the Janitors and Porters Local 1 affiliated with the Afro-American Federation of Labor; see its proposed labor "Agreement" in SEIU Microfilm Collection, Box 1, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University. This agreement dated from 1921-22.
- 26 1919 Official Year Book, 5, 23. On race, unions, and unskilled workers see Eric Arnesen, "'Like Banquo's Ghost, It will Not down': The Race Question and the American Railroad Brotherhoods, 1880-1920," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (December 1994): 1626-27.
- 27 Grossman, 179.

- 28 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1922), 411-12, 415-16.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 416.
- 30 Glenwood Preble to Len Small, 11 January 1924, filed with Illinois Parole and Pardon Board, "William F. Quesse, et al.," Pardon Hearings.
- 31 For the conflicts among railroad workers over the numerous grades of jobs in their industry see Arnesen, 1607-09, 1628-29.
- 32 *The Negro in Chicago*, 416.
- 33 Frank McWatters, a leader of the janitors from their earliest beginnings in 1902, belonged to the Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Loyal Order of Moose, the Eagles, "Rebecca," and the "Legion," perhaps the American Legion; Frank McWatters to M. A. Messlein, 19 December 1923, attached to M. A. Messlein to Len Small, 20 December 1923, Pardon Hearings. McWatters was almost certainly not alone in his fraternal affiliations. Quesse's father had been a member of the Masons and Odd Fellows; *History of Chicago and Souvenir of the Liquor Interest* (Chicago: Belgravia Publishing Co., [1893?]), 176.
- 34 Ellis W. Hawley, *The Great War and the Search for a Modern Order: A History of the American People and Their Institutions 1917-1933*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 124-27;  
Cohen, 201-05, 211, 324-25.
- 35 The Flat Janitors were among twenty-two unions contributing to a strike fund for the waitresses' union in 1914; Chicago Federation of Labor, minutes published as broadsides, 6 December 1914, CFL Papers.
- 36 Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Organizing the Postindustrial Work Force: Lessons from the History of Waitress Unionism, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 44, no. 3 (April 1991): 419-36.