



Branch Rickey's Law: How New York State's Ives-Quinn Act Opened the Door for Jackie Robinson

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Branch Rickey's Law:
How New York State's Ives-Quinn Act Opened the Door for Jackie Robinson

Keith Crook

A Thesis in the Field of History
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

The breaking of baseball's color barrier in 1945 was an important victory in the long, ongoing struggle for racial equality in America. Over the years, it has been a fertile subject for historians, scholars, and artists. Most of these works focus on Jackie Robinson, the ballplayer who heroically integrated our national pastime, and Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who defied Major League Baseball's surreptitious policy of segregation. Certainly, focusing on two "great men" makes for a simpler, more digestible story, but before they could do their "great things," activists, labor leaders, politicians, clergymen, and journalists had laid the groundwork for their achievement. These unsung heroes were fighting for much more than equality on the baseball field—and largely due to their pressure, New York became the first state in the nation to ban discrimination in the workplace on March 12, 1945. It was this law, which passed with overwhelming, bipartisan support, that I contend was dispositive in desegregating our national pastime.

Dedication

I want to preface my dedication by thanking Harvard University for creating a school predicated on meritocracy which allows students to “earn their way in.” Your father cannot donate money to build a new fitness center to get you into the Harvard Extension School. You can either handle the academic rigor, or you do not make the cut. This is also what has always attracted me to baseball: forget your family ties, your privilege, and your money, if you cannot hit the curveball, you do not make the cut. Except, this was not always the case with the sport I fell in love with before I could even walk. Until after World War II, even the very best players could not play if they were of African descent. This still sickens me. While I aspire to live in a colorblind society, until an American’s net worth and access to education, food, and health care are no longer determined largely by the pigmentation of their skin, I must speak out.

A lot of my research involved pouring over old newspapers and letters from the 1940s. I was continually struck by how much more racist our “greatest generation” was than I was taught in public school. At the same time, I learned that there was a civil rights movement long before Martin Luther King, Jr. “had a dream,” and integrating our national pastime was one of its goals. Therefore, I would like to dedicate this thesis to those largely overlooked agitators and activists who fought for decades to turn the tragedy of Charlie Thomas into the triumph of Jackie Robinson.

Acknowledgments

Many people helped make this paper possible, here are a few: beginning with my professors at Harvard, I would like to thank my Thesis Advisor, Walter Johnson, whose class on racial capitalism and the early American republic has reframed the way I look at the past *and* the present. I am also indebted to my Research Advisor, Ariane Liazos. She made the thesis process far easier than I could have ever imagined and was an absolute joy to work with. I also need to thank Donald Ostrowski. I believe one of his final acts running the thesis program was allowing me to switch from the capstone track after the deadline. And, I would never have even been writing a thesis at Harvard if Mitchell Wood, my mentor and professor at SUNY, had not helped me return to college and complete my undergraduate degree after 32 “gap years.”

There is one more professor I must thank. While retired from academia, my uncle, Jay Robert Crook, is fluent in a number of Middle Eastern languages including Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. More importantly, even in his tenth decade, his English is better than mine. He has read every draft of this paper without complaint, and the final product is undoubtably better because of him.

Finally, I must express my sincere appreciation to several esteemed historians and authors—Dominick J. Capeci, Jr., Chris Lamb, Larry Lester, and James W. Johnson—who not only inspired me with their scholarship but were generous enough to provide some encouragement and assistance along the way.

Usage

The main body of this paper draws heavily upon articles, letters, and memoranda, from 1945. There are numerous inconsistencies in capitalization in these primary documents which I have decided not to correct. For example, “Major League Baseball,” which is the name of an incorporated business that refused to sign African American ballplayers, appears both capitalized and lowercased. The Majors are also sometimes referred to as “Organized Baseball” or “Professional Baseball” by my sources. Both terms incorrectly suggest that the half a dozen Negro Leagues in operation during World War II were neither organized nor professional.

As far as the term “Negro” goes, according to Lester, in the 1920s, W.E.B. DuBois, then editor of the NAACP’s monthly magazine, *The Crisis*, led a successful campaign to have the word capitalized in print. By 1930, the *New York Times* made it common practice in their style book.¹ In 1945, it was considered insulting to write “negro,” and so I felt it was important to leave it uncapitalized in my quotations as it might reveal something about the writer’s character. As far as capitalizing race, I write “White” and “Black,” as is now the practice for the Society of American Baseball Researchers.

¹ Larry Lester, “A Note on the Use of Language and Period Terminology,” in *From Rube to Robinson: SABR’s Best Articles on Black Baseball*, ed. Duke Goldman and Larry Lester (Phoenix, AZ: Society for American Baseball Research, Inc., 2014), 4.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

Oh, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be.

- Langston Hughes, 1935

The breaking of baseball's color barrier in 1945 was an important victory in the long, ongoing struggle for racial equality in America.² Over the years, it has been a fertile subject for historians, scholars, and artists. Most of these works focus on Jackie Robinson, the ballplayer who heroically integrated our national pastime, and Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who defied Major League Baseball's surreptitious policy of segregation. Certainly, focusing on two "great men" makes for a simpler, more digestible story, but before they could do their "great things," activists, labor leaders, politicians, clergymen, and journalists had laid the groundwork for their achievement. These unsung heroes were fighting for much more than equality on the baseball field—and largely due to their pressure, New York became the first state in the nation to ban discrimination in the workplace on March 12, 1945. It was the Ives-Quinn Act, which passed with overwhelming, bipartisan support, that I contend was

² It is also known as "Baseball's Color Line," "Jim Crow Baseball," or "Baseball's Race Ban." All of these refer to a secret, unwritten agreement amongst Major League teams that they would not sign players of African descent. This policy did not always exist. Jackie Robinson was not the first African American to play baseball alongside whites. Our national game, like our nation, became more and more segregated after Reconstruction, and it was not until 1887 that the International League officially banned the signing of Black players; Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12-16.

dispositive in desegregating our national pastime.

In his award-winning documentary *Baseball*, Ken Burns poetically describes the integration of America's pastime as "two extraordinary men [collaborating in Brooklyn] to change the game forever."³ Lost in this artful framing is how Rickey and Robinson were the beneficiaries of sweeping social changes that took place in New York City during the Great Depression and the Second World War that were driven by the largest urban Black community in the world.⁴ And, it can hardly have been a coincidence that when baseball's color line broke in New York City, the number of African Americans residents living there was greater than the entire population of Miami, Denver, Atlanta, Houston, Seattle, San Diego, and Kansas City!⁵

Most of New York City's Black residents during this period were crammed into Harlem, a community in northern Manhattan that began at 110th Street and ended at 155th Street. This overcrowded and underserved neighborhood created a fertile environment for activism that made it, in the words of historian Martha Biondi, "a launching pad for the civil rights movement." Harlem was where "the nation's largest Black mass movement, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association" was based.⁶ It was also where the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters got started. More mainstream civil rights groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of

³ Ken Burns, *Baseball: The National Pastime*, "Inning Six," The PBS Video Collection: Fourth Edition (Arlington, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, 1994), DVD.

⁴ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15, Kindle; Harlem was the most popular destination for the African American diaspora in the first half of the 20th century. Many came there from the South to escape Jim Crow, such as A. Phillip Randolph, Ben Davis, Jr., and Walter White. However, Blacks from the North who aspired to something more, such as Langston Hughes, Malcolm Little (Malcolm X), Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois, Bayard Rustin and Effa Manley, flocked to Harlem as well.

⁵ "Historical Metropolitan Populations of the United States," Peakbagger.com, accessed August 22, 2021, <https://www.peakbagger.com/pbgeog/histmetropop.aspx>.

⁶ Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 20.

Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League also had their national headquarters in New York City because of its enormous Black population which was then concentrated in Harlem.⁷

Huge demographic changes took place in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century that were largely driven by two world wars and one depression. Biondi explains that during this period “African Americans went from being a mostly rural and agricultural population to a mostly urban and industrial one.”⁸ The impact of these migrations was felt most strongly in northern cities, and particularly in New York City. Most of its Black immigrants came from Jim Crow states where their status as citizens had improved little since the end of the Civil War. While their new home was far more segregated than most everyone remembers, New York State had no poll taxes or White primaries. Over the years, as the number of voters of color grew, it became harder and harder for politicians in the city and state to ignore their demands for equal citizenship. And, as I shall demonstrate, it was no accident that the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson just days before New York City’s voters went to the polls.

Besides a fear of Black voters, New York’s politicians worried about a recurrence of the race riots that seared the city in 1943. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia was especially concerned in the summer of 1945 that massive protests outside *and* inside Major League ballparks planned by the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee would trigger another uprising months before he left office.⁹ In Chapter IV, I discuss how this pressure group was organized by the Metropolitan Interfaith Coordinating Council, largely in response to

⁷ Dominic J. Capeci, Jr., *The Harlem Riot of 1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), 44.

⁸ Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 47.

⁹ Marc Norton, “The Untold Story of Jackie Robinson’s ‘I Never Had It Made,’” *Beyond Chron*, November 13, 2013, <https://beyondchron.org/the-untold-story-of-jackie-robinsons-i-never-had-it-made>.

New York State passing the Ives-Quinn Act in the spring of 1945, which made it illegal for private businesses, including baseball teams, to refuse to hire someone because of their race. This movement was backed by various trade union organizations, including the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) which had sponsored earlier campaigns to integrate America's national pastime. Thanks to labor's financial and administrative clout, this group grew in a matter of weeks into a Popular Front coalition that enjoyed the public endorsement of many prominent progressives, including A. Phillip Randolph, Paul Robeson, and Eleanor Roosevelt. At the same time, the passage of Ives-Quinn also brought additional pressure on New York's three Major League teams to integrate from politicians who fought for racial equality such as Councilman Ben Davis Jr., Assemblyman William T. Andrews, Congressmen Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and Congressman Vito Marcantonio.¹⁰

Rickey always insisted that New York's new anti-discrimination law played no role whatsoever in his decision to integrate his team. I shall argue to the contrary, but for now consider that after the 1942 season, he received authorization from the Dodger ownership group to sign Black prospects but did not sign Robinson until after the 1945 season. That means that for almost three years, a man known in baseball circles as "El Cheapo" was spending huge sums of money scouting Black baseball without signing a single player.¹¹ I contend that Rickey, who was never one to leave the slightest detail to chance, felt he needed the protection of an anti-discrimination law to ensure that the commissioner or the other teams could not sabotage his great experiment. Therefore, the

¹⁰ Chris Lamb, "How Politics Played a Major Role in the Signing of Jackie Robinson," *The Conversation*, April 12, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/how-politics-played-a-major-role-in-the-signing-of-jackie-robinson-56890>.

¹¹ Arthur Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story* (Grosset & Dunlop: New York, 1950), 11.

final obstacle facing Rickey's secret project to integrate his organization was removed when Governor Thomas E. Dewey signed the Ives-Quinn Act.¹²

The bill's signing would hardly have come as a shock to Rickey, who occasionally hobnobbed with Dewey as well as some of the other officials working on the legislation.¹³ Still, when he read in his morning paper that the governor had finally signed Ives-Quinn, weeks after it had cleared the state house, Rickey exclaimed to his wife, "They can't stop me now."¹⁴ It was only a couple days later that the famous meeting took place where the Dodger general manager alerted Red Barber, the team's beloved broadcaster, that the organization was about to start signing Black ballplayers.¹⁵ Regardless of what Rickey and some in his inner circle claimed, the new law clearly altered his timetable. Several weeks later, he started sending his Major League counterparts copies of Ives-Quinn along with a pamphlet from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce that suggested how local businesses might implement it. Rickey's cryptic cover letters stated that he thought they might find it interesting, but his was the type of genius that left nothing to chance.¹⁶ This mailing was probably his way of preparing the other clubs for the time in the near future when he would begin signing Black ballplayers. Not only was Rickey establishing in advance that his actions were compelled by the new law, but that he would have the new law on his side.

After Ives-Quinn took effect in July, pressure on New York's professional ball

¹² "New York Leads the Way," Empire State Plaza & New York State Capitol, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://empirestateplaza.ny.gov/people-new-york/new-york-leads-way>.

¹³ Jimmy Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life* (Penguin: New York, 2011), 73-78.

¹⁴ Sam Roberts, "Faster Than Jackie Robinson: Branch Rickey's Sermons on the Mound," *New York Times*, April 13, 1997, <https://nyti.ms/3shxj4R>.

¹⁵ Lee Lowenfish, *Branch Rickey: Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, NE, 2009), 359.

¹⁶ Branch Rickey to Larry MacPhail, April 26, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>; Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 116.

clubs to integrate intensified. Almost as soon as the State Commission Against Discrimination began operations, it started receiving demands that it take action against New York's segregated ballclubs from civil rights groups, activists, journalists, outraged citizens, and politicians. In fact, less than a week *before* Rickey secretly came to terms with Robinson, the State Commission notified the NAACP that a special subcommittee had been formed to investigate the Dodgers, Giants, and Yankees for violating the state's new anti-discrimination law.¹⁷

This pressure might have forced Rickey's hand or, more likely, allowed him to make personnel decisions that no previous baseball executive could have gotten away with. Just two years earlier, Bill Veeck Jr.'s purchase of the Phillies mysteriously fell through after he informed the commissioner that he intended to stock his line-up with stars from the Negro Leagues such as Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige, and Buck Leonard.¹⁸ Whether he was an abolitionist or an opportunist, Rickey saw the Negro Leagues as a huge untapped reservoir of talent that could help his team win championships. Moreover, he saw New York City's large African American community as an untapped revenue stream for his organization—and to his credit, more than half of the 26,623 fans who bought tickets to see Jackie Robinson's debut at Ebbets Field were Black.¹⁹ Moreover, the Brooklyn Dodgers set their record for attendance the year Robinson debuted.²⁰

¹⁷ Howard Turner to Walter White, August 22, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

¹⁸ Mike Klingaman, "Veeck was Ahead of Game," *The Baltimore Sun*, April 18, 2007, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2007-04-18-0704180031-story.html>.

¹⁹ Richard J. Shmelter, *The Los Angeles Dodgers Encyclopedia* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Publishers, 2017), 357.

²⁰ "1947 Brooklyn Dodger Stats," BaseballReference.com, accessed December 18, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/BRO/1947.shtml>.

A Brief Historiography

Given that Americans today are far more likely to watch than read, most of us probably know about the breaking of baseball's color line thanks to Burns' award-winning documentary and Brian Helgeland's popular motion picture *42*.²¹ Both are ground-breaking achievements, but each remains largely faithful to the original narrative that baseball's integration is the story of Jackie Roosevelt Robinson and Wesley Branch Rickey. But this is the narrative that Rickey himself propagated, and it is important to understand that his efforts to protect his place in the history books began even before he had made history. One of his first machinations involved having his special assistant, Arthur Mann, write a 3,000-word essay for *Look Magazine* so that it would hit the newsstands just as Robinson's signing was announced to the public in early 1946.²² This article was shelved because Mayor Fiorello La Guardia somehow prompted Rickey to move up Robinson's signing so it took place before New York's voters went to the polls on November 6, 1945.²³ Instead, *Look* profiled baseball's great emancipator the following March as the Dodgers opened the first integrated training camp in Major League Baseball history. This paean features Rickey's memorable quote that he signed Robinson because he could no longer face his God "knowing that His black creatures are held separate and distinct from His white creatures in the game that has given me all I can

²¹ Burns, *Baseball; 42*, directed by Brian Helgeland (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures and Legendary Pictures, 2013).

²² John Thorn and Jules Tygiel, "Jackie Robinson's Signing: the Real Story" in *SABR 50 at 50: The Society for American Baseball Research's Fifty Most Essential Contributions to the Game*, ed. Bill Nowlin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 163.

²³ Thorn and Tygiel, *Jackie Robinson's Signing*, 171; I challenge the conventional narrative that La Guardia asked to announce that a New York team was about to sign a Black ballplayer because of his baseball committee's efforts in Chapter VI.

call my own.”²⁴

Though Arthur Mann’s original effort was never published, he was soon to play Moses to Rickey’s God. The Dodger general manager was able to get his flunkie assigned as the screenwriter on *The Jackie Robinson Story*.²⁵ In some ways Mann was the perfect choice to write the script for this film because he was a great storyteller and had firsthand knowledge of many of the events it covered. But given his loyalties, it is not surprising that the *New York Times* review notes that it is Rickey’s character, not Robinson’s, that “articulates and resolves the basic theme of the picture.”²⁶ Considering how this movie hit theaters as Jackie was emerging as one of baseball’s biggest stars, it probably went further to establish Rickey’s version of events than any other source.

Mann also wrote a companion book titled *The Jackie Robinson Story* which was published around the same time that the film was released.²⁷ Together, these two sources are practically the Old Testament of baseball’s desegregation. Scenes and speeches from both resurface in important later works, including the film 42. Mann would go on to promote Rickey’s version of his war with archrival Larry MacPhail in *Baseball Confidential: The Secret History of the War Among Chandler, Durocher, MacPhail and Rickey*, celebrate Rickey’s genius in *How to Play Winning baseball*, and after Rickey left baseball, make a case for his beatification in *Branch Rickey: American in Action*.²⁸

²⁴ Chris Lamb, *Blackout: The Untold Story of Jackie Robinson’s First Spring Training* (University of Nebraska Press: New York, 2004), 119.

²⁵ *The Jackie Robinson Story*, directed by Alfred E. Green (Santa Monica, CA: Eagle-Lion Films, 1950).

²⁶ Bosley Crowther, “The Screen in Review; ‘Jackie Robinson Story,’ With Baseball Star Playing Himself, is Shown at Astor Theatre,” *New York Times*, May 17, 1950, <https://nyti.ms/3smGqB5>.

²⁷ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*.

²⁸ Arthur Mann, *Baseball Confidential: The Secret History of the War Among Chandler, Durocher, MacPhail and Rickey* (New York: David MacKay Company, Inc., 1951); Arthur Mann, *How to Play Winning Baseball* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1953); Arthur Mann, *Branch Rickey: American in Action* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

Popular literature about the breaking of baseball's color barrier has long since moved beyond Mann's propaganda. Still, with titles such as *Rickey & Robinson: The True, Untold Story of the Integration of Baseball* by Roger Kahn and *Rickey and Robinson: The Men Who Broke Baseball's Color Barrier* by Harvey Frommer, otherwise excellent books reinforce the original narrative that two great men changed history.²⁹ Jules Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and his Legacy* is something of a historiographical pivot point.³⁰ It presents a much more graphic depiction of the overt racism that was commonplace in America and explores the role that Black sportswriters such as Wendell Smith of the *Pittsburgh Courier* played in desegregating the Major Leagues. For the sake of comparison, *The Jackie Robinson Story* only has a single passing reference to Smith, who is described by Mann as "an enterprising colored newspaperman."³¹ Rachel Robinson considers Tygiel's book the best written on her husband, which is quite a compliment given that her husband wrote several himself.³² It made both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* best book lists, and *Sports Illustrated* honored it as one of the top 50 sports books of all time.³³

Though Tygiel's work represents an evolutionary leap, the author is hardly an apostate. He mentions Lester Rodney, the *Daily Worker's* crusading sportswriter, in one short passage and concludes this section with Smith's assertion that "communists did more to delay the entrance of Negroes in big league baseball than any other single

²⁹ Roger Kahn, *Rickey & Robinson: The True, Untold Story of the Integration of Baseball* (Rodale Books: New York, 2014); Harvey Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson: The Men Who Broke Baseball's Color Barrier* (New York: London: MacMillan; Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1982).

³⁰ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*.

³¹ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 27.

³² Jill Tucker, "Baseball History Expert Jules Tygiel Dies," SFGate, July 3, 2008, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Baseball-history-expert-Jules-Tygiel-dies-3206967.php>.

³³ "Jules Tygiel," San Francisco University Department of History, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://history.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/julestygielhistory.pdf>.

factor.”³⁴ Moreover, the author maintains that “the credit for banishing Jim Crow from baseball belongs solely to Branch Rickey.”³⁵ Given that Rickey, like much of America, despised communism, it is probably no coincidence that the role the *Daily Worker* played in integrating baseball was originally missing from the historical record.

The emergence of sportswriter Lester Rodney and the communist campaign to integrate baseball seems to begin with an obscure piece in the journal *Radical America* by Mark Naison, “Lefties & Righties: the Communist Party and Sports During the Great Depression.”³⁶ While Kelly Rusinack’s 1995 thesis, “Baseball on the Radical Agenda: The Daily and Sunday Worker on the Desegregation of Major League Baseball, 1933 to 1947,” was never published, it has been heavily cited by scholars and was deemed important enough to be accepted into the library of the National Baseball Hall of Fame.³⁷ Finally, with Irwin Silber’s *Press Box Red: The Story of Lester Rodney*, we get an entire book exploring the important role that communists and their fellow travelers played in pressuring baseball to integrate.³⁸

Rusinack went on to publish several papers with historian Chris Lamb about the role communists, unions, and radicals played in integrating baseball before they co-authored a chapter in his *Conspiracy of Silence: Sportswriters and the Long Campaign to Desegregate Baseball*. This book is my North Star. It challenges the version of history that the author contends Rickey “dictated to sportswriters and biographers” and argues

³⁴ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 37.

³⁵ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 207.

³⁶ Mark Naison, “Lefties & Righties: the Communist Party and Sports During the Great Depression.” *Radical America* 13, no. 4 (1979): 47-59.

³⁷ Kelly Rusinack, “Baseball on the Radical Agenda: The Daily and Sunday Worker on the Desegregation of Major League Baseball, 1933 to 1947” (Master’s Thesis, Clemson University, 1995), https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/arv_theses/1466.

³⁸ Lester Rodney and Irwin Silber, *Press Box Red: The Story of Lester Rodney, the Communist Who Helped Break the Color Line in American Sports* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), xvi.

that segregation in Major League Baseball ended for “reasons that had everything to do with Rickey and Robinson and for reasons that had little to do with them.”³⁹ Lamb’s assertion that “the story of the desegregation of baseball should not be told separately from the overall story of the civil rights movement” has been a guiding principle of my research.⁴⁰

Though baseball is not the main focus of the following works, they have been especially valuable in helping me see its integration as part of a larger struggle for racial equality. Harvard Sitkoff’s *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* is a comprehensive study of the social changes that took place during the 30s and 40s that set the stage for Jackie Robinson’s debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers.⁴¹ Martha Biondi’s *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* makes the case that the modern civil rights movement started in New York City during the Second World War, not later in Montgomery or with the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling.⁴² She does briefly discuss the desegregation of baseball, and writes that while “the northern civil rights struggle is not generally credited...it occurred in the context of social struggle and amid intense pressure on the baseball team owners [and] is inseparable from the larger Black rights movement in New York City, which had community leaders, trade unionists, and the new constituency of northern Black workers as its driving force.”⁴³

Finally, in *The Harlem Riot of 1943*, Dominic J. Capeci, Jr., does not connect

³⁹ Chris Lamb, *Conspiracy of Silence: Sportswriters and the Long Campaign to Desegregate Baseball* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 16-17.

⁴⁰ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 17.

⁴¹ Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*.

⁴² Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*.

⁴³ Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 42.

Fiorello La Guardia to Jackie Robinson, but he does detail the pivotal role that race relations played in city politics during the war.⁴⁴ After reading this book, one has a better understanding as to why New York State would be the first to pass a law intended to stop private businesses from discriminating in the workplace. And, given how Mann portrayed La Guardia as a politician only interested in the integration of baseball in order to garner votes during an election cycle, it is interesting to read that New York City's mayor had already been fighting his own battle on hiring discrimination through executive actions and legislation that targeted employment firms long before Rickey came to Brooklyn.⁴⁵

As far as Ives-Quinn, New York's ground-breaking law has been the subject of many scholarly works over the years. Among the first is "The New York State Commission Against Discrimination: a New Technique for an Old Problem," which appeared in the *Yale Journal of Law* in 1947.⁴⁶ The legislative and political battles that led to the law's passage are explored in Anthony S. Chen's "Experimenting with Civil Rights: The Politics of Ives-Quinn in New York State, 1941–1945."⁴⁷ However, as far as linking the law to baseball's integration, Henry Fetter concludes in his essay "The Party Line and the Color Line: The American Communist Party, the 'Daily Worker,' and Jackie Robinson," that it had a "lack of demonstrable impact on Rickey's signing of Jackie Robinson."⁴⁸ Moreover, Biondi titles her chapter on Ives-Quinn "Dead Letter Legislation" and argues that by 1950, "New York activists [saw the law] as defending the

⁴⁴ Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943*.

⁴⁵ Dominic J. Capeci, Jr., "Fiorello H. La Guardia and Employment Discrimination, 1941-1943," *Italian Americana* 7, no. 2 (1983): 49-67, accessed March 4, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29776043>.

⁴⁶ Yale Journal of Law Staff, "The New York State Commission against Discrimination: A New Technique for an Old Problem," *The Yale Law Journal* 56, no. 5 (1947): 837–63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/792960>.

⁴⁷ Anthony S. Chen, "Experimenting with Civil Rights: The Politics of Ives-Quinn in New York State, 1941–1945," in *The Fifth Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) 88-114.

⁴⁸ Henry D. Fetter, "The Party Line and the Color Line: The American Communist Party, the 'Daily Worker,' and Jackie Robinson," *Journal of Sport History* 28 (2001): 375–402.

status quo rather than becoming an instrument for occupational integration.”⁴⁹ As much as I learned from both of these works, I shall hopefully demonstrate that in 1945, Ives-Quinn was widely expected, by friend and foe, to have the same “superpower” to open doors for Black workers in peace time that the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) had during the war.

For the most part, the role that New York’s legislators and their new law played in the integration of our national pastime is ignored or given short shrift in the Robinson-Rickey-centric literature that I have read. In *The Jackie Robinson Story*, Mann dismisses the efforts by politicians, both on the Left and the Right, to push baseball to integrate as a cynical attempt to woo Black voters. Of course, even if this were the case, it would not mean that elected representatives in New York State, in pursuing their own narrow self-interests, did not influence when, where, and how baseball desegregated. I believe Mann’s dogged defense of his friend’s legacy is best explained by Lamb, who writes in “How Politics Played a Major Role in the Signing of Jackie Robinson” that “Rickey wanted people to think that he—and only he—was responsible for the breaking of baseball’s color barrier, and in the ensuing years he would dictate this version of events to sportswriters and biographers.”⁵⁰ I would only add that the lack of sincerity Rickey displayed protecting his legacy did not mean that he was not sincere about breaking baseball’s color barrier.

New York State seems to have found a happy medium between the conflicting narratives. Its official website has a section devoted to important milestones in state history. One item features a photo of Robinson in his Dodger uniform with a blur

⁴⁹ Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, chap. 12.

⁵⁰ Lamb, “How Politics Played a Major Role in the Signing of Jackie Robinson.”

underneath which reads, “the Ives-Quinn law opened the door for Brooklyn Dodgers’ General Manager Branch Rickey to sign Jackie Robinson.”⁵¹ I have no idea who authored this caption, but nothing I have encountered in my research contradicts it. Indeed, it has inspired the title of this thesis.

In recent years, the narrative of baseball’s integration has grown to include the essential role that the Communist Party and the Black press played by hounding Major League Baseball for over a decade. Their efforts included petition drives that netted millions of signatures, large demonstrations at the World’s Fair, Paul Robeson lecturing the commissioner and league owners, and the creation of national organizations dedicated to the sport’s integration. None of these produced results. Suddenly, less than two months after hiring discrimination officially became illegal in New York State, Jackie Robinson was an employee of the National League Baseball Club of Brooklyn.

Methodology and Sources

My research window for this paper has coincided with the worst pandemic in a century. Fortunately, a multitude of primary documents relevant to my topic were available online. The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s digital collections portal provided access to hundreds of items that were essential to my research.⁵²

Moreover, their staff could not have been more helpful. ProQuest has pretty much all the NAACP archives available online, including several hundred documents related to their

⁵¹ “New York Leads the Way,” Empire State Plaza & New York State Capitol, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://empirestateplaza.ny.gov/people-new-york/new-york-leads-way>.

⁵² As of February 2022, all integration-specific documents are temporarily offline during a reorganization of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s digital collections portal. In my citations, I have supplied a general search link for the digital collection where my documents should be searchable once they have been put back online. In the interim, the archive has graciously hosted a finding aid for this collection along with this evergreen URL, <https://archives.baseballhall.org/repositories/2/resources/144>.

efforts to end discrimination in sports. Also, the few newspapers that covered baseball's color barrier, such as the *Daily Worker*, the *New Amsterdam News*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, are accessible via the Internet.

Each of the archives I planned to visit remained closed or offered reduced access as I was researching this paper. For instance, the Schomburg Center in Harlem limited my visit to one hour and five folders. However, a number of archives were extremely helpful in searching and scanning for this project. The La Guardia & Wagner Archives at La Guardia Community College sent me hundreds of pages, including transcripts of every single one of the mayor's Sunday radio shows and several folders of his correspondence related to La Guardia's efforts to integrate baseball in the summer of 1945. Even New York City's Municipal Archives, which closed its doors to the public in March 2020, located and scanned several key documents for me.

Unfortunately, there are obstacles one encounters researching the integration of Major League Baseball that cannot be overcome by a helpful archivist or a vaccine. My primary sources rarely agree on basic facts and often seem to have been more concerned with their historical legacy than historical accuracy. Perhaps a bigger problem stems from the fact that the Major Leagues were never officially segregated. When Commissioner Landis was unable to duck the issue during his 25 years in power, he insisted that all teams were free to sign Black ballplayers, but none were good enough. This lie was dutifully echoed by owners, general managers, and coaches.⁵³ And yet, Major League Baseball's company line about Blacks not having the ability to play at their level should have been laid to rest once and for all when Joe Louis knocked out Max Schmeling at

⁵³ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 79.

Yankee Stadium on the eve of World War II.⁵⁴ Instead, the pretense became more and more offensive as the shortage of able-bodied White men on the home front grew more and more acute during the war.

The talent pool was so depleted during the 1945 Major League season that the St. Louis Browns were forced to play one-armed Pete Gray in the outfield. Many know his story, it was even turned into a made-for-television-film in 1986.⁵⁵ However, few are aware that the Dodger scout famous for bringing Jackie Robinson east to meet Rickey in late August 1945, Clyde Sukeforth, actually had to play catcher in 18 big league games that season.⁵⁶ Not only was he in his forties by then, but his baseball career ended in 1934 when he accidentally shot himself in the eyes with buckshot on a hunting trip. And yet, baseball executives, including Rickey in an interview the day after he signed Robinson, publicly maintained that in 1945 there were simply no Blacks good enough to compete against amputees and legally blind Whites in Major League Baseball.⁵⁷ Mendacity was an essential job skill for a baseball executive, and despite his nickname as the Deacon and his squeaky clean reputation, Rickey would have made an incredible CIA Director. Given all of this, as I have put my case together, I have often been forced to weigh conflicting claims.

⁵⁴ Nigel Collins, "Louis-Schmeling: More Than a Fight," ESPN, June 19, 2013, https://www.espn.com/boxing/story/_/id/9404398/more-just-fight.

⁵⁵ *A Winner Never Quits*, directed by Mel Damski (Burbank, CA: Columbia Pictures Television, 1986).

⁵⁶ "Flock's Sukeforth, 42, Still Iron Man in the Mask," *New York Daily News*, April 29, 1945, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/443710133/>; "Clyde Sukeforth," BaseballReference.com, last modified October 12, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/s/sukefc101.shtml>; not only did Sukeforth play catcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers 11 years after he had hung up his cleats, but he put up the best OPS of his career (.659).

⁵⁷ Dan Daniel, "All Met Teams Soon Must Sign Negro Players—Rickey," *New York World-Telegram*, October 25, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Chapter II.

Background

This chapter begins by introducing Branch Rickey and Larry MacPhail, two of the main characters in this alternative narrative of baseball's integration. Then I explain how Black baseball was an important revenue stream for White ballclubs, particularly in New York City. Finally, the campaign lead by A. Phillip Randolph to get Black workers hired in defense factories in 1941 is presented as antecedent for New York State's 1945 law banning workplace discrimination.

Baseball's Great Emancipator

Branch Rickey's arrival in Brooklyn predated Ives-Quinn's passage by about three years. As the brains behind the St. Louis Cardinals incredible run of success, he showed himself to be one of the most innovative executives to ever run a sports franchise. He invented the minor league farm system and pioneered the use of batting cages and pitching machines.⁵⁸ However, one sacred ballpark tradition that was left untouched during his two decades in St. Louis was segregation. When Rickey departed for Brooklyn, Sportsman's Park remained the only venue in the major leagues that still separated spectators by race. Could he have stopped this practice? For questions like this, I tend to be guided by historian Ira Katznelson's maxim: "It makes no sense to write a

⁵⁸ Eric S. Hintz, "Branch Rickey, Baseball Innovator," Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, Smithsonian: National Museum of American History, accessed July 17, 2021, <https://invention.si.edu/branch-rickey-baseball-innovator>.

retrospective morality tale condemning politicians and citizens who were imprisoned by Jim Crow [and] we should not imagine a freedom of action they did not have.”⁵⁹ But it should be pointed out that *only* a year after Rickey left St. Louis, the club stopped confining Black patrons to a Jim Crow section in Sportsman’s Park.⁶⁰

Though Rickey is now a civil rights icon with his personal papers stored in the Library of Congress alongside those of Frederick Douglas, A. Phillip Randolph, and Bayard Rustin, a small contingent of sportswriters and baseball executives viewed him as an opportunist who saw the writing on the wall before any of his peers. One was Lester Rodney, who created the *Daily Worker’s* sports section and its campaign to integrate the Major Leagues. He wryly points out in *Press Box Red* that the picture of Abraham Lincoln behind Rickey’s desk did not appear until *after* he had signed Robinson.⁶¹ Few in baseball had as long and complicated a relationship with Rickey as Larry MacPhail. Long after he was out of baseball, MacPhail told *Sports Illustrated* that “Churchill must have had Rickey in mind when he said, ‘there, but for the grace of God, goes God.’” He added that “Rickey was not interested in doing something constructive for either baseball or the Negro players [and] was not kidding anybody in baseball with all that bunk about his conscience.”⁶² It should be pointed out that when MacPhail made these comments in 1959, he clearly had an axe to grind with Rickey.

Perhaps a more telling disclosure about Rickey came from Arthur Mann, who was his loyal scribe as well as an eyewitness to the integration of baseball. In his first draft of

⁵⁹ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White* (W. W. Norton & Company: New York, 2006), 29.

⁶⁰ Scott Ferkovich, “Sportsman’s Park (St. Louis),” SABR: Society for American Baseball Research, accessed July 17, 2021, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/park/sportsmans-park-st-louis>.

⁶¹ Silber, *Press Box Red*, 101.

⁶² Greg Holland, “Feuds, Finale and a Fairy Tale,” *Sports Illustrated*, August 31, 1959, <https://vault.si.com/vault/1959/08/31/feuds-finale-and-a-fairy-tale>.

the inside story of Robinson's signing, Mann wrote that when his boss arrived in Brooklyn, he "was besieged by telephone calls, telegrams, and letters of petition on behalf of Black ballplayers" and that "this staggering pile of missives were so inspired to convince him that he and the Dodgers had been selected as a kind of guinea pig." However, when Rickey reviewed the manuscript, he insisted that this passage be removed.⁶³ Instead, Mann would tell the world that at his first meeting with Dodger ownership, Rickey asked for, and received, permission to scout and sign Black ballplayers.⁶⁴ Both may be true, but baseball's great emancipator seems to have been as concerned with his legacy as his lineup.

When Rickey was given authorization to break baseball's color barrier after the 1942 season, there were many players and coaches in the Major Leagues who had played against Black teams and told White reporters how good they were. For example, Yankees center-fielder Joe DiMaggio, considered by many as the greatest all-around player of his generation, told reporters that Satchel Paige was the greatest pitcher he had ever faced.⁶⁵ Hall of Fame pitcher Walter Johnson, after attending a Negro League game, told the *Washington Post* that Josh Gibson was the best catcher in *all* of baseball.⁶⁶ There have been many similar testimonials from baseball's biggest stars, such as Lou Gehrig and Dizzy Dean. These claims are now supported by a recent study which shows that from 1900 to 1948 (the first year of the Negro American League to the last year of the Negro National League), Black teams won 316 and lost 283 games against squads made up of a

⁶³ Silber, *Press Box Red*, xi; the draft that Rickey marked up is in the archives of the Library of Congress.

⁶⁴ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 11.

⁶⁵ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 100; the author adds a revealing observation from the *Daily Worker's* Lester Rodney that he was among a crowd of reporters that DiMaggio made the comment to but was the only one who reported it.

⁶⁶ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 137.

minimum of five Major League stars.⁶⁷ Somehow, despite all of these racially-mixed matches taking place, it took the Dodgers almost three years and \$25,000 scouting the Negro Leagues and Latin America to find Jackie Robinson.⁶⁸ To understand how much money that \$25,000 was in terms of 1940s baseball, consider that in 1943, the National League's Most Valuable Player, Stan Musial, earned \$4,500.⁶⁹ Obviously, if the miserly Rickey wanted to sign Black players, and his bosses were willing to fund his efforts to find them, *something* else was preventing him for almost three years.

According to Mann's account, which Rickey likely had editorial control over, the years long gap between the ownership group's approval and the signing of Robinson was on account of his "carefully drawn program" to break baseball's color barrier. The Deacon's elaborate scheme was said to include "a half-dozen different steps or hurdles, each of which had to be cleared without accident or fault in order for the project to succeed."⁷⁰ Getting approval from the team's owners had only been the first part of a plan that was supposedly so secret that even the club's scouts were told they were looking for players for a Brown Dodgers ballclub that would play in a new Negro League.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Todd Petersen, "The Negro Leagues are Major Leagues," Baseball Reference, Peterson NLB vs. MLB Database, accessed July 18, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/negro-leagues-are-major-leagues.shtml>; Peterson suggests that the success of Black teams against squads made up of Major League ballplayers is probably underreported in his data because the mainstream press, a major source for the study, would be less likely to report those results.

⁶⁸ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 115.

⁶⁹ "Stan Musial," *Baseball-Reference.com*, accessed July 17, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/m/musiast01.shtml>.

⁷⁰ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 12.

⁷¹ Jackie wrote a piece for *Ebony Magazine* in 1948 where he claimed that Clyde Sukeforth told him that he was scouting him for the "Brooklyn Dodgers," and that when he told this to the other Monarch players in the dugout, they all started laughing and making jokes. Had the Dodger scout told Robinson they were interested in signing him for the Brown Dodgers, which was a real team in a rival league managed by Hall of Famer Oscar Charleston, it would not have struck the players as laughable; see Jackie Robinson, "Jackie Tells How He Laughed at Scout," *Ebony Magazine*, June 1948, 20; <http://jwtml1945.blogspot.com/2016/04/whats-wrong-with-negro-baseball-by.html>.

Steps two and three of Rickey's scheme called for finding an African American ballplayer who would be the "right man both on the field *and* off the field."⁷² Thus, ready-made superstars such as Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige could not be considered as they liked to enjoy themselves off the field. It is probably true that had Rickey signed a Jack Johnson-type for his great experiment, the momentum for further integration might have stalled.⁷³ But beyond the six steps Mann details, Rickey's biographer, Lee Lowenfish states that "he believed that some impetus from forces outside baseball would be needed to start the ball rolling."⁷⁴ In Chapters III to VI, I shall demonstrate how Ives-Quinn provided that impetus.

Though Rickey and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) were on opposite sides of the political spectrum, both faced similar dilemmas. For each to achieve his goal, respectively winning the World Series and winning World War II, they would need the support and cooperation of unabashed White supremacists. Though Major League Baseball's sixteen teams were all based outside the former Confederacy, many players came from the South. This was back when prospects could initially sign with any organization before becoming captives of the sport's infamous reserve clause. In fact, when Rickey's son, who had been with the Dodgers since the MacPhail days, was finally briefed on his father's secret plans to integrate their club, he pushed back, "We'll be cut out of scouting in the South."⁷⁵ But signing talent in the rest of the country would not be

⁷² Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 12.

⁷³ Johnson was the first African American heavyweight champion. Defying America's social norms, he married a White woman and ran a mixed-race nightclub. After numerous attempts by the U.S. Justice Department to put him in jail, he was finally convicted for violating the Mann Act in 1910. The judge presiding over the sensational trial, Kennesaw Mountain Landis, would go on to become the first Commissioner of Major League Baseball; "Jack Johnson (Boxer)," Wikipedia.com, accessed February 1, 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Johnson_\(boxer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Johnson_(boxer)).

⁷⁴ Lowenfish, *Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman*, 359.

⁷⁵ Mann, *Branch Rickey: American in Action*, 216.

much easier in this era because, given a choice of teams, most northern Whites would avoid the Dodgers to avoid playing alongside Blacks. Then there was spring training; all sixteen teams conducted their months-long preseason operations in the deep South where, in many municipalities, Blacks and Whites standing on a ballfield together violated a state or local ordinance.

These logistical challenges are akin to those facing FDR as he tried to prepare the U.S. military for World War II. Most of the U.S. population lived outside Jim Crow states but the majority of training centers were in the South, and there was no chance that the dyed-in-the-wool segregationists controlling the U.S. Congress were going to cede any of their lucrative facilities to the North.⁷⁶ Likewise, there was no chance that Rickey was going to get Major League Baseball to change how it did business in order to accommodate his Black players. So, despite the Deacon's turgid claim that he signed Robinson *in spite of* the politicians *not because of* them, journalist Jimmy Breslin wrote that Rickey himself lobbied Governor Dewey to "pass a law that would put the first Negro into baseball."⁷⁷

If Branch Rickey is baseball's "Abraham Lincoln" then Larry MacPhail of the New York Yankees is its "Jefferson Davis."⁷⁸ After Ives-Quinn passed in 1945, it was the new Yankee owner who led the efforts to defend baseball's "peculiar institution." When those efforts failed, he ordered his minor league pitchers to throw at Robinson during the 1946 season.⁷⁹ When that failed, he orchestrated a vote at the league meetings in August

⁷⁶ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*, 93-94.

⁷⁷ Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 75.

⁷⁸ During MacPhail's "Hall of Fame" career he was fired by all four Major League clubs he led, never lasting longer than three seasons. He was such a toxic person he was even fired as team president of the New York Yankees when he was an owner of the team; Ralph Berger, "Larry MacPhail," Society for American baseball Research," accessed February 8, 2022, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/larry-macphail/>.

⁷⁹ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 133.

to block the International League's MVP from being promoted to the Major Leagues.⁸⁰ Finally, before Robinson's first game in Brooklyn at the start of the 1947 season, MacPhail managed to prevail upon Commissioner Happy Chandler, whose candidacy he championed, to suspend Rickey's manager (after first trying to lure him to the Yankees) for the entire season.⁸¹ This was a disaster for Rickey because the sixth and final step in his plan was "acceptance of the player by his teammates," and Leo Durocher, with his strong personality and a fierce compulsion to win that transcended racism, was meant to be an important part of baseball's great experiment.⁸² It is hard to imagine the infamous incident between Robinson and Ben Chapman, which was featured both in Burns' documentary and Helgeland's biopic, taking place with Durocher in the Dodger dugout instead of the affable Burt Shotton.

Ironically, before they found themselves bitter enemies on opposite sides of baseball's color line, the two men had a complex professional and personal relationship that went back years. MacPhail had been an owner of a minor league team in the Cardinal organization that was so successful it outdrew Rickey's big-league club in 1932. When the Reds tried to lure the Deacon away from the Cardinals in 1934, he convinced them instead to hire his pal, who he had actually just been forced to fire.⁸³ MacPhail quickly turned the Cincinnati franchise around before once again wearing out his welcome. Still, during his tenure with the Reds he introduced night baseball, airplane travel, ball girls, and generally showed himself to be every bit as innovative and astute as his mentor. Then

⁸⁰ Bob Cooke, "MacPhail Brands as Lie Rickey's Statement That Big Leagues Asked Negro Ban," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 21, 1948, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

⁸¹ Berger, "Larry MacPhail."

⁸² Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 12.

⁸³ The relationship between MacPhail and Rickey was so complicated that it took Arthur Mann an entire book to explain it. For the full story, from Rickey's perspective, see Mann, *Baseball Confidential*.

in 1940, with the Dodger franchise floundering in the standings and drowning in debt, Rickey convinced the Brooklyn Trust Company to hire his friend to turn their franchise around. Once again, the fiery redhead worked miracles and quickly made the Bums relevant to their fans and solvent with their creditors.⁸⁴

During his time with the Brooklyn Dodgers, MacPhail, who was a notorious drinker, made some shockingly open-minded comments about his sport's race ban. Several stand out. In July 1942, Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis called in Leo Durocher, then MacPhail's manager, to force him to walk back a statement he had made to Wendell Smith that he would sign Black players *only* the bosses would not allow it.⁸⁵ The Dodger manager told the press after the meeting that the quote was made up, and Landis subsequently issued several official statements that Major League teams on his watch have *always* been free to sign Black players. MacPhail, however, dared to contradict the so-called Czar of Baseball, "There exists a ban on Negro players in the major leagues, an unwritten law, but nevertheless a law." Perhaps, he was angry that the commissioner had gone after his manager, or perhaps he was drunk. After all, he did make these comments at a luncheon at Toots Shor's restaurant. Either way, it was an astonishing admission for a Major League Baseball executive.⁸⁶

On July 31, the CIO committee on sports convened a *Loya Jirga* of the Left at Roseff's restaurant in New York City. The goal of this gathering of activists, politicians, and labor leaders was to form a broad-based pressure group that would campaign to

⁸⁴ "Larry MacPhail, Baseball Impresario, Dies," *Daytona Morning Journal*, October 2, 1975, Google Newspapers, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=OWslULm vb_UC&dat=19751002&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁸⁵ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 189-190.

⁸⁶ "MacPhail Insists Unwritten Law Keeps Negroes Out of Majors," July 28, 1942, publication name missing from clipping but probably from a Black newspaper in Philadelphia, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

extend the advances that African Americans were making in war factories (thanks largely to the FEPC) to the Major Leagues which at the direction of the president had become a part of the war effort.⁸⁷ The attendees included Effa Manley, who owned the Newark Eagles of the Negro National League and was one of the leaders of the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work Campaign” in Harlem, and Father Raymond Campion, a local civil rights activist who would eventually serve on the Mayor’s Committee for Unity. Also present were sports writers from several Black papers, as well as the *Daily Worker* and *PM*. During the meeting, the group elected William T. Andrews, a New York State Assemblyman and former NAACP official, as their chairman and settled on calling themselves the Citizens Committee to End Jim Crow in Baseball.⁸⁸ Eventually, this group would enjoy the support of dozens of prominent progressives, including Randolph.⁸⁹

One of Andrews’ first efforts involved sending letters in early August to the executives of New York’s baseball teams requesting meetings in light of the recent statements made by Commissioner Landis that they were free to sign Blacks. To make the requests more impactful, he arranged with his friend Walter White, leader of the NAACP, to send them out as if they were coming directly from him.⁹⁰ Out of the blue, on

⁸⁷ “Major League Baseball, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and World War II, 1941-1942,” National Archives, accessed February 1, 2022, <https://text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2016/02/23/major-league-baseball-president-franklin-d-roosevelt-and-world-war-ii-1941-1942/>; according to documents in the National Archives, negotiations between the Major Leagues and the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, General George C. Marshall about the role baseball would play in the war effort began almost a year before Pearl Harbor.

⁸⁸ Memorandum from Madison Jones to Walter White and Roy Wilkins, July 31, 1942, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

⁸⁹ “Notables to Demand Negroes in the Majors,” October 31, 1942, *New Amsterdam News*, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/notables-demand-negroes-majors/docview/226002084/se-2?accountid=11311>.

⁹⁰ Telegram from Catherine Freeland to Walter White, September 9, 1942, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>; the close relationship between Andrews and White may explain why the association seemed to be much more directly involved with his Citizens Committee than they were with the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee that was formed after Ives-Quinn became law three years later.

September 9th, MacPhail called the NAACP offices informing them that he would meet the following afternoon to discuss White's letter.⁹¹ The short notice might explain why only a few members of Andrews' committee joined him for the meeting with MacPhail. White, who in theory had asked for the meeting, was stuck in Washington, and wired Catherine Freeland in the New York office of the NAACP to have either Thurgood Marshall or Roy Wilkins represent him.⁹²

The meeting lasted 90 minutes, and during that time MacPhail told his guests everything they wanted to hear and more. Before the activists left, he even suggested that *after* the World Series, his Major League team should play an exhibition series with the Kansas City Monarchs to benefit the war effort. While this sounded great, as Lamb points out, MacPhail already would have known that he would be leaving the Dodgers for a commission in the army immediately *after* the season ended. Moreover, he knew that decades earlier, Landis had not only banned actual Major League teams from playing exhibitions against Black teams but capped the number of Major League stars that could take the field together against them.⁹³ This incident is typical MacPhail, and the underhanded way he dealt with Andrews' delegation foreshadows how he would handle the threat of integration when he returned to the game two years later.

Shortly after MacPhail left for the army, he was quietly fired by the Dodger ownership group and replaced with his teetotaling mentor. The ownership group had grown tired of his drinking and the inappropriate behavior it caused.⁹⁴ Fortunately for

⁹¹ Telegram from Catherine Freeland to Walter White, September 9, 1942, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

⁹² Telegram from Walter White to Catherine Freeland, September 9, 1942, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

⁹³ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 211.

⁹⁴ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 211.

MacPhail, departing to serve his country left his reputation intact, and when he was discharged from the military at the end of 1944, he was able to buy a third of the New York Yankees. Though he did not own a majority of the club, the deal put him in charge of day-to-day operations as team president.⁹⁵ During his first spring training, and less than two weeks after Ives-Quinn had been signed into law, Colonel MacPhail gave an interview to the *Baltimore Afro-American* that was considered so sensational by the Black newspaper that they gave it an extra edition and a front-page headline. “If we are to survive as a democracy,” the new Yankee boss told the reporter, “there should be no discrimination in a national pastime such as baseball.” While MacPhail claimed to be in favor of integration, he explained that he was just “one of sixteen owners” and that the problem was convincing “the majority of sixteen club owners along these lines.” He added for good measure that when he was involved in collegiate sports, he never experienced a problem with integrated teams. When asked if there were any Black players capable of playing in the Major Leagues, he gushed “I’ve seen a whole lot of them, and I also know many of them. I can name some who are definitely of major league caliber.” These comments come just seven months before MacPhail would release his infamous manifesto, “The Negro in Baseball,” which among other things, insists that there were then no Black players qualified to play in the Major Leagues. Still, the most blatantly dishonest comment comes where MacPhail tells the reporter, “I’m glad the Ives-Quinn anti-discrimination bill has been passed and I hope it will have some effect on baseball.”⁹⁶ It did indeed have an effect on baseball and, as we shall see, he would later

⁹⁵ “MacPhail Dies,” 1975.

⁹⁶ Richard Dier, “Extra! Owner of the N.Y. Yankees Opposes Big League Bias!,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, March 24, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp->

lead the Major League's efforts against integration. While it is easy to conclude that MacPhail defended the *status quo* because of his position near the apex of America's racial hierarchy, the New York Yankees, like many American businesses in 1945, had a significant financial stake in the survival of segregation.

Profits From Prejudice

As much as Rickey might have secretly believed in equal opportunity for all, bringing in a few Negro League stars would put the Brooklyn Dodgers on a more equal footing with the Yankees in the battle to monetize the largest Black fanbase in baseball. When he first asked for permission to integrate the Dodgers, George V. McLaughlin, the banker who controlled the club's purse strings, did not just agree but admitted "we probably haven't tapped the Negro market enough."⁹⁷ Perhaps the best way to illustrate what an understatement this was is to consider that the legendary Satchel Paige made the first of his 20 career starts at Yankee Stadium in 1934. However, at the time of Rickey's first meeting with the Dodger ownership group, Paige was still almost two years away from his first start at Ebbets Field.⁹⁸ This can partially be explained by looking at a map

prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/owner-n-y-yankees-opposes-big-league-bias/docview/531553252/se-2?accountid=11311.

⁹⁷ Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 13; McLaughlin was a longtime fixture in New York City politics before entering the world of finance. As the police commissioner, he promoted the first Black officer in city history. He was the first choice of the Fusion Party in 1932 to run for mayor, but his refusal to run led them to settle on the eventual winner, Fiorello La Guardia; "Breaking Race Barriers: The Life and Times of George V. McLaughlin," Chespeak, <http://chespeak.blogspot.com/2017/12/breaking-race-barriers-life-and-times.html>.

⁹⁸ Jim Overmyer, "Black Baseball at Yankee Stadium: The House That Ruth Built and Satchel Furnished (with Fans)," in *From Rube to Robinson: SABR's Best Articles on Black Baseball*, ed. Duke Goldman and Larry Lester (Phoenix, AZ: Society for American Baseball Research, Inc., 2014), 65; Christopher Hauser, *The Negro Leagues Chronology: Events in Organized Black Baseball, 1920-1948* (MacFarland & Company, Inc.: Jefferson, NC, 2006), 144; as far as how involved Randolph himself was with bringing the Brotherhood to Yankee Stadium, Overmyer speculates that another official in the union, who had roots in Tammany Hall, probably was the driving force behind getting Ruppert to donate his ballpark. That may or

of New York City. Black fans could walk across the Macombs Dam Bridge from Harlem to get to Yankee Stadium, but if they wanted to get to Ebbets Field they needed to buy subway tokens. But geography only partially explains why the Yankees were so much better at turning the Black residents of their city into a revenue stream than the Dodgers were. After all, the New York Giants played at the Polo Grounds, which was even closer to Harlem.

During the ownership of Colonel Jacob Ruppert, a former Tammany politician who served four terms in the U.S. Congress, the Yankees began making a concerted effort to connect with the African American community just across the Harlem River. It started with the Colonel donating the use of his ballpark to A. Phillip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters for a fundraiser in 1930.⁹⁹ This was anything but an anonymous act of charity—a copy block in the center of the poster, which was displayed throughout Harlem, read:

YANKEE STADIUM
Is Donated to the Colored People of Harlem for the Benefit of
The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters by Courtesy of
COLONEL JACOB RUPPERT
Owner of the New York Yankees¹⁰⁰

By 1935, Ruppert and the Yankees General Manager, Ed Barrow, were among the largest patrons of the New York County Colored Democratic Association—they were even the biggest donors for a testimonial dinner for Assemblyman William T. Andrews at the

may not be the case, but I have seen a copy of the first draft of the contract between the Brotherhood and the Yankees in Randolph's personal papers in the Library of Congress.

⁹⁹ "Col. Rupert Donates Use of Yankee Stadium for Porters' Benefit," *New York Age*, June 21, 1930, Newspapers.com, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/40866163>.

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence D. Hogan, "The House that Ruth Built and Pop Opened: Negro League Baseball at Yankee Stadium," *Our Game*, MLB.com," accessed September 10, 2021, <https://ourgame.mlbblogs.com/the-house-that-ruth-built-and-pop-opened-a2b1f713939f>.

Saratoga Club on Lennox Avenue.¹⁰¹ This affair was to thank Andrews and another assemblyman for their campaign against a state-wide redistricting effort designed to dilute the African American vote in Harlem.¹⁰² Earlier, we pointed out how New York's huge Black vote was a factor in New York State politics, and was a major reason that its politicians pushed civil rights legislation both in Albany and Washington. But incident reminds us how Ives-Quinn was preceded by efforts to diminish the influence of voters of color.

Besides befriending Black politicians and activists, the Yankees built relationships with social organizations such as the Black Elks who, since their founding in 1898, had become one of the largest African American fraternal orders in the nation.¹⁰³ Their annual Elks Day parade was one of the biggest events on the Harlem social calendar and by 1940, the day's festivities had grown to include a gala double-header at Yankee Stadium between the top teams in the Negro Leagues. According to the *New York Amsterdam News*, the guest list in 1940 was topped by Mayor La Guardia and read "like a section of Who's Who."¹⁰⁴ A. Phillip Randolph, who had helped bring Black

¹⁰¹ Souvenir Program for "Testimonial Dinner in Honor of Assemblymen James E. Stephens and William T. Andrews," in Regina Andrews papers, 1935, MG 275, Box 20, Folder 3, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

¹⁰² "N.Y. Assemblymen Honored at Dinner by Democrat Body," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 8, 1935, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/ny-assemblymen-honored-at-dinner-democrat-body/docview/531099508/se-2?accountid=11311>.

¹⁰³ Marshall Ganz, Ariane Liazos, and Theda Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 38, muse.jhu.edu/book/61164.

¹⁰⁴ "Grays and Baltimore Top Elks Day at Stadium on Sunday: Rival Clubs to Battle for The Lead, *New York Amsterdam News*, July 27, 1940, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/frays-baltimore-top-elks-day-at-stadium-on-sunday/docview/226179451/se-2?accountid=11311>; Randolph's attendance at the game as well as that of Scott Joplin's widow, Lotte Stokes, is mentioned in Edward A. Berlin, *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era* (United States: Oxford University Press, 2016) 322.

baseball to Yankee Stadium a decade earlier, was also among the dignitaries in attendance that afternoon. Over the years, he had emerged as one of the nation's leading civil rights leaders. Though Randolph is not generally linked to the integration of baseball, during the war he sent telegrams to Commissioner Landis demanding integration and publicly supported the efforts of other pressure groups.¹⁰⁵ But his biggest contribution to breaking baseball's color barrier might have been organizing a massive march on Washington to end to employment discrimination just before the U.S. got involved in the war.¹⁰⁶

Randolph Cracks the Door for Robinson

If the FEPC was the father of Ives-Quinn, the March on Washington Movement was its grandfather. In the fall of 1940, more than a year before the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, the American economy was already at war. But even as the jump in defense spending and the draft were ending the Great Depression for Whites, Blacks were finding jobs in war factories almost as scarce as they were in Major League Baseball. So, on September 27th, Randolph met with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to ask him to issue orders that all future defense contracts include an anti-discrimination clause and the armed forces integrate.¹⁰⁷ He got neither of these.

¹⁰⁵ Telegram from A. Phillip Randolph on Behalf of the March on Washington Movement Committee to Kennesaw Mountain Landis, December 3, 1943, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

¹⁰⁶ DOCSTeach, "A. Philip Randolph to Fiorello La Guardia, June 5, 1941," accessed October 25, 2021, <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/letter-from-a-philip-randolph-international-president-of-the-brotherhood-of-sleeping-car-porters-to-fiorello-la-guardia-mayor-of-new-york-city>.

¹⁰⁷ "Transcripts of White House Office Conversations, 08/22/1940 - 10/10/1940," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, accessed March 1, 2022, <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/transcr4.html>.

To be fair, the level of access that Black leaders including Randolph, whom President Woodrow Wilson once called “the most dangerous man in America,” had to the Roosevelt White House was unprecedented in American history.¹⁰⁸ This was largely due to the influence of Eleanor Roosevelt, who herself was unprecedented in American history.¹⁰⁹ However, access did not equate to action because FDR’s ambitious war plans—which included 10 million men in arms and D-Day in Europe by July 1, 1943—were beholden to staunch defenders of White supremacy such as Senator Theodore Bilbo and Congressman John Rankin.¹¹⁰ Hence, the president was unwilling to offer Randolph anything but friendly advice, “You have to make me do it!” FDR’s meaning here, according to author Ta-Nehisi Coates, was that “it’s the job of activists to generate, and apply, enough pressure on the system to affect change.”¹¹¹ As I demonstrate shortly, this quote could just as easily apply to the battle to pass Ives-Quinn in New York State and the subsequent efforts to force Major League Baseball to comply with it. For now, it was

¹⁰⁸ Mark Engler and Paul Engler, “The ‘Make Me Do It!’ Myth,” *Dissent Magazine*, February 26, 2021, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/the-make-me-do-it-myth; Yes, President Lincoln did meet with Black leaders, including Frederick Douglass, at the White House on August 14, 1862, but it was to convince them to support his plans to send them and their people back to Africa after the Civil War; Paul J. Scheips, “Lincoln and the Chiriqui Colonization Project,” *The Journal of Negro History* 37, no. 4 (1952): 418–53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2715797>.

¹⁰⁹ In 1945, Eleanor Roosevelt would lend her name as a sponsor of the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, and during the 1950s, she made a number of appearances with Jackie Robinson. In fact, each would appear as a guest on the other’s radio show.

¹¹⁰ Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi was a powerful and openly racist senator (and member of the KKK!) from Mississippi who came to epitomize the Jim Crow South to such a degree that the term “Bilboism” was widely used by opponents of segregation; “Theodore G. Bilbo,” Wikipedia, accessed March 22, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_G._Bilbo; John E. Rankin was a powerful congressman, also from Mississippi, who famously used his chairmanships to ensure that the U.S. government did as little as possible for non-Whites as possible; “John E. Rankin,” Wikipedia, accessed March 22, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_E._Rankin.

¹¹¹ Because of Whites-only elections in the South, Jim Crow legislators tended to serve longer and, with committee assignments based on seniority, controlled the chairmanships that could and did make legislation disappear into bureaucratic black holes; John Conner, “Who Leaked FDR’s War Plans?,” HistoryNet, <https://www.historynet.com/who-leaked-fdrs-war-plans.htm>.

after this meeting, or so the story goes, that Randolph decided to organize a protest march on the nation's capital to make the president "do it."¹¹²

In recent decades, Americans have watched everyone from Louis Farrakhan to Glenn Beck stage a march on our nation's capital, but in 1941, Randolph's idea was dangerous. Less than nine years earlier, the U.S. Army forcibly evicted the Bonus Army from Washington with bayonets, tanks, and tear gas. That bloody incident proved to be a political disaster for President Herbert Hoover and helped put FDR into the White House. And now, Randolph was threatening to send 100,000 angry, jobless Blacks marching through a Jim Crow city protected by White soldiers, in the heat of the summer. *What could go wrong?* Even Wendell Smith's *Pittsburgh Courier*, which would create the Double V Campaign and sponsor Jackie Robinson's tryout with the Boston Red Sox, called Randolph's scheme "a crackpot proposal."¹¹³ It was clear to both sides that the civil rights struggle *and* the war effort would be set back if there was violence, but as the day for the demonstration grew closer, Randolph and Roosevelt seemed to grow firmer in their resolve.

On paper, FDR enjoyed historically large margins in Congress, but it took him three months in early 1941 just to pass the Lend Lease Act. From that point onwards, America was openly arming and supplying nations at war with the Axis powers, and was herself just one incident in the Atlantic or the Pacific away from being a full belligerent. On the brink of war, the president was even more unwilling to alienate the segregationist committee chairmen in Washington who controlled the national government's legislative

¹¹² Engler, "The 'Make Me Do It!' Myth."

¹¹³ Jervis Anderson, *A Phillip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: McFarland & Company, Publishers, 1972), 251.

agenda. As summer approached, there seemed to be no choice for Randolph and White but to stage the protest which, given the international situation, would infuriate a lot of supporters even if it were peaceful. Desperate for a way out, Randolph turned to an old friend.

Fiorello La Guardia's role in the March on Washington negotiations, which resulted in the creation of the FEPC, gives a new context for his attempts to mediate an end to baseball's color barrier in the summer and fall of 1945. Mann's gospel characterized his efforts as those of a "vote seeking politician," and falsely claimed that the mayor was "heightening his own actions" to integrate baseball on his Sunday radio broadcasts.¹¹⁴ However, La Guardia never mentioned his efforts to integrate baseball on his radio show, was not running for re-election and, my research suggests, fought far harder for far longer to get African Americans jobs than Branch Rickey ever did.¹¹⁵

According to Randolph's biographer, Jervis Anderson, his relationship with La Guardia began at the end of World War I when both belonged to the Socialist Party in New York City. At the time, Randolph was struggling to organize Black workers, and La Guardia, then practicing law, volunteered his legal services pro bono. Later, as a congressman from a largely White district, he never turned down a request to speak at a Brotherhood convention.¹¹⁶ Once La Guardia became New York City's Mayor-elect, their special relationship was featured in the *Chicago Defender*: "A. Phillip Randolph and the Pullman Brotherhood learned...this man of the people could always be counted upon

¹¹⁴ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 116, 124.

¹¹⁵ I have searched the transcripts for all of Mayor La Guardia's Sunday radio broadcasts from 1939 through 1945, and he never once discusses the integration of baseball on his show. These broadcasts can be found online at the LaGuardia Wagner archive, <https://www.laguardiawagnerarchive.lagcc.cuny.edu/pages/SearchResults.aspx>. Transcripts; see LAG in Congress.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, *A. Phillip Randolph*, 252.

to give a helping hand to his brother be he black as well as white—to him it was always a call to duty from his fellowman.” The story goes on to describe Gotham’s new mayor as the leader of a “modern abolitionist movement, no less far reaching than that of John Brown.”¹¹⁷ That is an overstatement. La Guardia governed as a principled gradualist, and was closer in temperament to White than Randolph. According to Capeci, he had a “genuine concern” for “race relations” but also understood that he “needed political success to advance his progressive agenda.”¹¹⁸ While La Guardia was no abolitionist, by the time he was running for a third term, an editorial in the *New Amsterdam News* lauded him for having appointed “more Negroes to big, responsible jobs in city government” than all the other mayors in the city’s history combined.¹¹⁹

The White House was keenly aware of La Guardia’s warm relations with the Black community and activists such as Randolph and White. This, along with the fact that he had crossed party lines to endorse FDR in 1940, made him the perfect choice to bridge the divide between Harlem and Hyde Park.¹²⁰ La Guardia’s mediation in the March on Washington standoff began with a letter from Randolph formally requesting his

¹¹⁷ “Defender Interviews Mayor La Guardia, Executive Reiterates Stand on Race Issue,” *Chicago Defender*, November 18, 1933, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/defender-interviews-mayor-laguardia/docview/492431894/se-2?accountid=11311>; Congressman La Guardia was no John Brown, but according to Howard Zinn, he occasionally took principled stands against segregation, despite representing a district in East Harlem with few Black residents. For instance, when the bill to create the American Legion was debated in the House, he argued that the bill must include language ensuring that any veteran who served in the military could join regardless of skin color. When Oscar Stanton De Priest became the first Black member of Congress in the twentieth century in 1929, none of the other members wanted to have his office next to theirs. It was only La Guardia who wired the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, “I shall be glad to have him next to my office.” Howard Zinn, *La Guardia in Congress* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959), Kindle.

¹¹⁸ Dominic Capeci, Jr., email to the author, May 12, 2021.

¹¹⁹ “A Liberal Mayor,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 6, 1940, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/liberal-mayor/docview/226119000/se-2?accountid=11311>.

¹²⁰ “La Guardia Backs Roosevelt 3D Term,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1940, <https://nyti.ms/3vP1kMC>.

intercession. Given their long relationship, it seems like a phone call would have sufficed. But besides being friends, both of these historic titans were political leaders with constituencies to satisfy. Perhaps Randolph's letter was meant to show his followers that he was doing something? Or perhaps, the mayor asked him for a request in writing, so the White House did not think he was grandstanding? Either way, the language reflects the deep regard that one of the greatest civil rights leaders of the twentieth century had for La Guardia and contradicts the Rickey-centric narrative that he was just a transactional politician interested in votes.

Randolph began his appeal to the mayor "as a humanitarian and idealist, who has captured the hearts of the peoples of the world for [his] constructive vision and matchless statesmanship" and hailed him as "one of the few great living champions of the cause of democracy and liberty." Then he wrote how he intended to lead a march of his supporters to City Hall on June 27th to ask him "to memorialize President Roosevelt to issue an executive order to abolish discrimination in all departments of the Federal Government and national defense." He closed reverently, "Kindly accept my great personal esteem and appreciation for your interest and cooperation for the cause of the advancement of the Negro people for America and the historic role you are playing to create a better world for all mankind."¹²¹

La Guardia did not wait for Randolph and his delegation to march up to City Hall on June 27th and formally ask him to intercede. A week after receiving Randolph's letter, the mayor hosted Randolph at City Hall, along with White, and Eleanor Roosevelt. The

¹²¹ State Historical Society of Iowa, "A. Phillip Randolph to Fiorello La Guardia, June 5, 1941," accessed October 19, 2021, <https://iowaculture.gov/sites/default/files/history-education-pss-protest-randolph-transcription.pdf>.

fact that each of these prominent activists would also support efforts to integrate baseball reflects how breaking the sport's color barrier was, along with integrating the military, and establishing a permanent FEPC, a top priority for the early civil rights movement. For now, the matter at hand was coming up with a way to avert the march, which was less than three weeks away.¹²²

Over the years, the First Lady had grown into a trusted friend and ally of White and Randolph. She had even been asked to address the March on Washington rally. But, after she reminded the civil rights leaders how she was on their side, she advised them that staging the event would be a "grave mistake at this time." She then prodded Randolph, who was the driving force behind the demonstration, if he had thought through the problems that would arise when 100,000 Blacks tried to find lodgings and food in a Jim Crow city. Randolph's responded that the segregated establishments would have to bend their rules in deference to the large numbers of Blacks in the city. Mrs. Roosevelt replied that this would surely trigger confrontations with the police and might ignite a much wider conflict.¹²³ La Guardia agreed with her, but said that the crisis with Blacks being excluded from defense work "had passed the pious statement stage...and that something very concrete has got to be done."¹²⁴

After the city hall conference, the president called the mayor to see if he had been able to stop the protest. La Guardia told him that at this point the only chance of stopping the March on Washington was for FDR to meet directly with Randolph and White. The

¹²² Anderson, *A. Phillip Randolph*, 255.

¹²³ Anderson, *A. Phillip Randolph*, 255.

¹²⁴ "Jobs Parade Under Fire by White House," *Chicago Defender*, June 21, 1941, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/jobs-parade-under-fire-white-house/docview/492693548/se-2?accountid=11311>.

president accepted La Guardia's assessment, and shortly thereafter negotiations began in the White House. At the request of Randolph and White, La Guardia attended as mediator. These sessions finally bore fruit several days before the demonstration when the president agreed to issue an executive that order banned discrimination in defense and government hiring during the war and established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to ensure compliance. The original draft of Executive Order #8802, the first intended to help African Americans since Reconstruction, was actually written in an ante room of the Oval Office by an ad hoc committee led by La Guardia.¹²⁵ Though the FEPC did not nearly level the playing field for defense work between Black and White workers, it did dramatically raise the standard of living for millions of African Americans. More importantly, it was part of the chain of events that led to the Ives-Quinn Act.

The FEPC Begets Ives-Quinn

The FEPC had a number of high-profile civil rights wins during World War II, such as the Philadelphia transit strike of 1944. For six days, the City of Brotherly Love, including its vital war production, was brought to a grinding halt by White transit workers who refused to work because the FEPC had strong-armed the Philadelphia Transit Company into agreeing to train eight Black motormen. Ultimately, the president backed the FEPC and had the war department take over the city's transportation system.

¹²⁵ So high was La Guardia's standing with Black America that Randolph and White pressed the president unsuccessfully to put him in charge of the FEPC. Moreover, when Randolph had problems selling the deal to his most militant supporters in Harlem, he brought the mayor uptown to get them on board. And towards the end of the war, when the campaign to make the FEPC permanent took shape, Randolph got La Guardia to serve on the National Council for a Permanent FEPC; see Capeci, "Fiorello H. La Guardia and Employment Discrimination," 51-52; see also Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943*, 11-14.

Once the White strikers faced immediate termination, they accepted integration.¹²⁶

Overall, the agency brought the number of Blacks in defense jobs up to 8 percent and tripled their rate of government employment. It was less successful bringing about equality in terms of compensation, working conditions, and union participation.¹²⁷ Still, it made so much progress for Black America that it was often in danger of being defunded or neutered by a powerful alliance of pro-business and pro-Jim Crow legislators in the nation's capital.

Once again, it was Randolph who led the way. In 1943, he formed the National Council for a Permanent FEPC in his office on 125th Street in Harlem and within a year it had an office on H Street in Washington to better orchestrate a national campaign to make the civil rights agency a permanent part of the federal government. Around this time, La Guardia's name begins appearing on the organization's letterhead as a member of the Council alongside that of W. E. B. Du Bois and Senator Robert Wagner.¹²⁸ Despite the best efforts of New York's elected representatives in Washington to finally get their legislation out of committee, the bill to make the FEPC permanent would eventually be killed by filibuster.¹²⁹ As the battle dragged on in the nation's capital, a movement

¹²⁶ Allan M. Winkler, "The Philadelphia Transit Strike of 1944," *The Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (1972): 73-89, doi:10.2307/1888387.

¹²⁷ Kayomi Wada, "President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice (FEPC)," *BlackPast.Org*, December 29, 2008, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/presidents-committee-fair-employment-practice-fepc>.

¹²⁸ FEPC Meetings and Minutes of Policy Committee of National Council for a Permanent FEPC meetings, 1943-1951, ProQuest, <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001608-017-0457&accountid=11311>; Senator Wagner threw out the first pitch at the Yankee Stadium at the 1930 Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters fundraiser at Yankee Stadium; "Col. Rupert Donates Use of Yankee Stadium," June 21, 1930.

¹²⁹ David Litt, "The Senate Filibuster is Another Monument to White Supremacy," *The Atlantic*, June 27, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/senate-filibuster-monument-white-supremacy/613579>.

emerged in New York State to create its own anti-discrimination law as a back-up, just in case the federal agency was allowed to expire.

One of the groups who helped make Ives-Quinn a reality, the Mayor's Committee on Unity, also played a role in the integration of baseball *after* the law took effect. This committee was originally created by La Guardia, at the urging of White and other Black leaders, after the 1943 rioting in Harlem. Though some have called this a belated response, the mayor did not see his task force strictly as a way to prevent a repeat of the rioting in Harlem. Rather, he told John D. Rockefeller that he hoped to avoid a repeat of the awful "repercussions following demobilization" that took place when World War I ended.¹³⁰ Indeed, the sudden end of the Great War unleashed massive social and economic upheaval across America, which in turn sparked race riots in dozens of cities.¹³¹ La Guardia not only wanted to avoid another "Red Summer," but saw his task force of prominent citizens, drawn from a cross-section of the city's various racial and religious communities, becoming a national model for managing race relations in the postwar world. Still, this committee would have no legislative power. Only a mandate from the mayor to use its collective "influence to correct racial and religious prejudice and develop the common interest of the community in mutual understanding and respect."¹³² As I discuss later, the Mayor's Committee on Baseball, which was formed at the secret urging of Rickey in August 1945 to stop demonstrations at New York City's ballparks, was a subcommittee of the Committee on Unity.

¹³⁰ Capeci, *The Harlem Riot of 1943*, 166-168.

¹³¹ Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 22.

¹³² "Racial Unity Group Created by Mayor," *New York Times*, February 28, 1944, <https://nyti.ms/3siluv5>.

Daniel W. Dodson, the Executive Director of the Mayor's Committee on Unity, was a central figure in baseball's integration in 1945. He had been a well-respected sociologist and scholar in the nascent field of race relations at New York University in February 1944 when, at La Guardia's request, he took a leave of absence to work for the mayor. As such, he was peripherally involved with the crafting and passing of Ives-Quinn, which was commonly referred to by the press and the politicians as "New York's FEPC."¹³³ Eventually, Dodson became Rickey's inside accomplice in the signing of Jackie Robinson—and was central to many of the events that link the law to the breaking of baseball's color barrier. Though pressure on New York's baseball teams to comply with Ives-Quinn began almost as soon as the governor signed the bill, it would not be until July, when the law took effect, that Dodson and his Mayor's Committee on Unity officially entered the escalating conflict and, in his words, became "a significant factor in bringing about...the eventual employment of a Negro in major-league baseball."¹³⁴

As far as Dodson and his committee's involvement with Ives-Quinn, his report stated that members communicated with the legislators responsible for crafting the bill and "finally endorsed [their draft] with some minor suggestions and changes." Afterwards, when the first public hearings were held in New York City, it was Dodson himself who made the opening presentation on behalf of the law's passage. Moreover, as the legislation was being debated in the State Assembly, and with Dewey's position still unclear, Dodson led a group of citizens supporting the bill to meet with the governor. It

¹³³ One example of thousands is J.A. Rogers, "New York's FEPC Provisions Would be Illegal in 13 American States," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 17, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/rogers-says/docview/202169713/se-2?accountid=11311>.

¹³⁴ Dan Dodson, "The Mayor's Committee on Unity of New York City," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 19, no. 5 (1946), 293, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2263229>.

was while addressing his delegation that the Republican leader finally came out in support of the Ives-Quinn Act, thus ensuring its passage in the State Assembly.¹³⁵ I should point out that these were claims made by Dodson himself who, though renowned for his integrity, appeared to be quite capable of deception when he became Rickey's wingman. Also, for the sake of perspective, Dodson was just one of many public figures who advocated for the passage of Ives-Quinn.

As GI's were approaching the Rhine and Marines were landing on Okinawa, an army of progressive voices in New York State were pushing legislators there to act before it was too late—these included former governor, Herbert H. Lehman, activist Rabbi Stephen Wise, Michael J. Quill, the leader of the city's transit union, the NAACP's Special Counsel, Thurgood Marshall, and three of the central figures in the creation of the FEPC in 1941, La Guardia, Randolph, and White.¹³⁶ The Ives-Quinn Act was a bipartisan effort co-sponsored by Irving M. Ives, the Speaker of the New York State Assembly, and Elmer F. Quinn, Minority Leader of the State Senate. But Republicans controlled the executive and legislative branches of the state government, and it was a longtime party apparatchik, Charles H. Tuttle, who was most responsible for drafting the original bill. He was a lawyer by trade who resigned as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York in order to run a spectacularly unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign in 1930. In fact, his margin of defeat was so large that it helped position Franklin Roosevelt as a serious contender for the White House two years later.¹³⁷ For our

¹³⁵ Dodson, "The Committee on Unity," 292.

¹³⁶ Chen, "Experimenting with Civil Rights," 89; full disclosure: I owned Rabbi Stephen Wise's home in Ridgefield from 2008-2015.

¹³⁷ "Tuttle is Swamped," *New York Times*, November 5, 1930, <https://nyti.ms/3J0IISA>.

purposes, the most interesting thing about the man who wrote the first draft of the law that opened the door for Jackie Robinson is that he was friendly with Branch Rickey!¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 73-74; the second most interesting thing about Tuttle is that his mansion in Hamilton Heights was featured in the film *The Royal Tenenbaums*.

Chapter III.

“The Spirit of Ives-Quinn”

This chapter begins by exploring links between Rickey and the politicians associated with the Ives-Quinn. It then demonstrates how the law’s passage was an inflection point in his secret project to break baseball’s color barrier. From there, it frames familiar events from the traditional narrative as reactions to Ives-Quinn. This section concludes with a discussion of how the Major League owners agreed to form a study group to examine the “race problem” that would include Rickey and MacPhail.

From Quaker Hill to Bear Mountain

All Major League Baseball teams cultivated relationships with government officials. The fact that the sport continued during World War II attests to this, but Rickey took it to another level. During his run as the St. Louis Cardinals general manager, he became a cog in the Missouri Republican Party machine. At one point Rickey sat on the Missouri Republican Finance Committee and was an honorary Colonel on the staff of Governor Forrest C. Donnell. This involved getting sworn in wearing a military dress-uniform at Donnell’s inauguration in 1941.¹³⁹ He also had ties to Barak Mattingly, a G.O.P. powerbroker who held important roles in the state and national party.¹⁴⁰ Did

¹³⁹ Branch Rickey to Forrest C. Donnell, December 20, 1940, Branch Rickey Papers, Box 65, Politics, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Meredith C. Jones to Members of the Republican Finance Committee, October 9, 1940, Branch Rickey Papers, Box 65, Politics, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁰ Telegram from Branch Rickey to Barak Mattingly, November 6, 1940, Branch Rickey Papers, Box 65, Politics, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Mattingly played important roles in Dewey’s 1944 and 1948 presidential campaigns, and was instrumental in recruiting General Dwight Eisenhower to run as a Republican in 1952, “Barak Mattingly of Missouri G.O.P., Ex-National

Rickey harbor political ambitions for himself? *Perhaps*. When he left St. Louis, a friend wrote, “Brooklyn is not the end of the line...you may yet be President of the United States!”¹⁴¹ And, Branch Rickey certainly possessed the gifts to be a successful politician; he was a highly sought-after public speaker, a master tactician, and was widely respected. This probably helps explain why his claim that politics and Ives-Quinn played no role in his signing of Jackie Robinson was largely accepted as gospel. However, he had privately encouraged several of the most prominent officials involved with the Ives-Quinn Act, including the governor.¹⁴² To be clear, there is no evidence that Rickey influenced anyone associated with New York State’s historic law banning workplace discrimination, but his furtive efforts on the bill’s behalf further erodes his claim that politicians and their anti-discrimination law played no role in his great experiment.

Over the years, Rickey became so associated with his favorite expression, “luck is the residue of design,” that he turned the phrase into a lecture series.¹⁴³ And the saying could certainly apply to his entree into the inner sanctum of New York State politics. Shortly after taking over the Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch and Jane Rickey took a drive up to Quaker Hill, an enclave in the town of Pawling, New York, where some of the most powerful and influential people in America came to relax. Ostensibly, there was nothing baseball-related about this excursion. It was just a social call on an old college friend from Ohio Wesleyan, Samuel “Pinky” Thornburg. However, Rickey was no doubt aware that his friend’s wife was the sister of Lowell Thomas, and that the world-renown

Committeeman Dead—Member of Group That Backed Eisenhower,” New York Times, July 18, 1957, 19, <https://nyti.ms/3oufrmh>.

¹⁴¹ Tom Doherty to Branch Rickey, November 11, 1942, Branch Rickey Papers, Box 9, “D” Miscellaneous, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴² Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 73-74.

¹⁴³ Hugh Rawson and Margaret Miner, editors, *Oxford Dictionary of American Quotations* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 396.

broadcaster was a neighbor of the Thornburg's. And he had probably heard that Thomas liked to entertain an eclectic mix of celebrities, scholars, artists, tycoons, and politicians.¹⁴⁴ One wonders if the newly relocated Rickey, so used to having friends in high places in Missouri, imagined that he could make some important connections by paying a social call in Pawling? Even President Roosevelt had been known to swing by from nearby Hyde Park to watch the annual charity softball games Thomas organized between his team, the Nine Old Men, and the White House press correspondents.¹⁴⁵ Whether by design or by chance, Rickey and Thomas would become such close friends that the Dodger executive would occasionally fill-in as a guest host on his national radio show.¹⁴⁶

The governor who signed Ives-Quinn into law was also an extremely close friend of Thomas. That friendship began before Dewey became the state's chief executive. In fact, the celebrity broadcaster played a small but interesting role in his rise to higher office. Back in April 1938, Thomas read a piece in the paper that Dewey, then New York City's mob-busting district attorney, was looking to rent a summer house in Connecticut. Though he had never met the rising Republican star, Thomas boldly phoned him and suggested that it would be better for his political prospects to summer in New York State. He invited Dewey to bring his family up to visit Quaker Hill. The offer was accepted, and the future governor and his wife loved the area. Thomas then used his influence to get New York's future first family a retreat in the tawny enclave priced for an honest public

¹⁴⁴ Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 73-74.

¹⁴⁵ Anthony P. Musso, "Lowell Thomas's 'Nine Old Men' Softball Team Drew Celebrities to Quaker Hill in Pawling," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/story/news/2018/08/21/lowell-thomass-nine-old-men-softball-team-drew-luminaries-pawling/1041631002>; the name Nine Old Men was a snarky dig at FDR, who had famously labeled the Supreme Court of the United States "nine old men" when they were obstructing his New Deal during his first term.

¹⁴⁶ Lowenfish, *Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman*, 341.

servant's salary. This was no small favor given that Rickey was unable to afford a home up there. The farm Dewey bought with the help of Thomas would later be used as a prop in newsreels during his presidential campaigns. But the broadcaster also helped prepare his new friend to run for higher office by coaching him in his home studio on the art of speaking on the radio and in front of his movie cameras.¹⁴⁷ Last but certainly not least, Thomas introduced Dewey to his friend and mentor, Norman Vincent Peale, who was then a hugely popular minister known for his *Power of Positive Thinking* books and his *Art of Living* radio broadcasts.¹⁴⁸ Peale would prove to be a huge asset for Dewey on the campaign trail in his two runs for the White House.¹⁴⁹ Rickey had his own special connection to Peale. In 1945, the Thornburg's and the Peale's founded *Guideposts Magazine* with his money.¹⁵⁰

In a further bit of synchronicity, Branch Rickey took over the Brooklyn Dodgers just five days before Thomas Dewey won his first term as governor on November 3, 1942. Their paths would cross over the next few months and the Deacon was impressed enough to write an old political crony back home in Missouri in December 1943 urging that their party unite around Dewey in the upcoming presidential election. Rickey's detailed analysis reveals that he followed politics as closely as the National League standings. It was his considered opinion that Dewey had a much better chance of flipping New York State than did John Bricker or Wendell Willkie, which he saw as the only

¹⁴⁷ Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 318-322.

¹⁴⁸ "Norman Vincent Peale," Wikipedia, accessed March 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Vincent_Peale.

¹⁴⁹ Carol George, *God's Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale and the Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 183.

¹⁵⁰ "10 Things to Know About Norman Vincent Peale," Guideposts, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.guideposts.org/better-living/positive-living/positive-thinking/10-things-to-know-about-norman-vincent-peale>; *Guideposts Magazine* is still in publication.

chance to defeat FDR. Sure enough, the G.O.P. did run Dewey at the top of the ticket in 1944, with Rickey's friend, Governor Bricker of Ohio, as their vice-presidential nominee. It speaks to Rickey's strong grasp of American politics that this election would be the closet that FDR came to defeat in his four campaigns for the White House. Moreover, it speaks to Rickey's standing in Republican circles that, as is made apparent in his analysis of the race, he was already personally acquainted with the party's three leading candidates for its presidential nomination a year before the election.¹⁵¹

Though Rickey had met Governor Dewey previously, an interesting encounter between the two seems to have occurred in the winter of 1945. This was at the Barn, a clubhouse Thomas built on the Quaker Hill golf course where he frequently held Sunday salons. In this casual setting, where formality was frowned upon, baseball's great emancipator took advantage of his access to New York State's chief executive. Breslin wrote of this meeting, which would have taken place several months before Ives-Quinn, "Rickey was determined to get help from Dewey. Not for jobs for relatives, or road-paving contracts, or state grants for the team. Branch Rickey wanted Thomas Dewey to pass a law that would put the first Black man into baseball."¹⁵² This is not to suggest that Rickey dreamed up Ives-Quinn, and then sold it to the Governor of New York State so he would have a free hand to sign Black ballplayers. The story is more complicated than that.

A bill to prevent workplace discrimination in New York State had been sent to Dewey in March 1944. Rather than sign it during his run for the White House and

¹⁵¹ Branch Rickey to William Harmon, December 26, 1943, Branch Rickey Papers, Box 65, Politics, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵² Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 75.

effectively cede the South to FDR, he kicked the can down the road by forming the New York State Temporary Commission Against Discrimination to study the problem. But in January of 1945, probably right around the time that he and Rickey were mingling in the Barn, his bipartisan commission released a public report that concluded that New York State needed to pass a law that would make it illegal for private employers to discriminate based on race or religion.¹⁵³ So, given that Dewey had just run out of cans to kick down the road, was free from the constraints of a national election, and was being pressed by key members of his party to get the law done, it is doubtful that Rickey had any influence over Dewey's eventual decision to support and sign Ives-Quinn. Again, what this encounter suggests is that far from playing no role in his decision to sign Jackie Robinson, Rickey felt he needed to have a state law banning discrimination by private employers on his side before he took on baseball's unwritten law.

A friendship began that same day, according to Breslin's reporting, which further attests to Rickey's interest in the proposed anti-discrimination bill which would come to dominate Empire State politics for the next couple months. Also at the Barn was the aforementioned Tuttle, who was then working pro bono as the council for the New York State Temporary Commission Against Discrimination. Tuttle himself had already composed the draft of an anti-discrimination bill that was circulating for comment and criticism. It is not hard to imagine a scenario wherein Dewey, not wishing to commit to a position with Rickey, jocularly suggests that he go and talk to Tuttle, who was as passionate about civil rights as any Republican in Albany. Whatever brought the two

¹⁵³ Morroe Berger, "The New York State Law Against Discrimination: Operation and Administration," *The Cornell Law Quarterly* 35 (1950): 749, https://hollis.harvard.edu/permalink/f/1mdq5o5/TN_cdi_proquest_journals_1290156218.

together that afternoon, they hit it off immediately. Both were extremely religious men who wore their faith on their sleeves and believed that segregation was an abomination.

Sensing that he had met a kindred spirit, Rickey told Tuttle the Charlie Thomas story. This was his go-to anecdote whenever he wanted to establish his *bona fides* as a supporter of racial equality, defend himself against charges of racism, or recruit someone into his conspiracy against Jim Crow in baseball.¹⁵⁴ So many around Rickey recalled hearing his dramatic retelling of this incident that Harrison Ford, playing him in the film *42*, tells it to Jackie Robinson, played by Chadwick Boseman, to explain his decision to sign him.¹⁵⁵ The gist of the story is that back when Rickey was coaching college baseball in the Midwest (sometimes its football), he tried to check his team into a hotel but was told by the clerk that one his players, Charlie Thomas, could not stay over because he was Black. Rickey was finally able to convince the hotel manager to allow the student sleep on a cot in his room. Thus, baseball's future great emancipator was forced to witness Charlie's pain and suffering firsthand.¹⁵⁶ After hearing the story, Tuttle is said to have commented, "They can't ignore the Constitution like that." Rickey is said to have shot back, "We have to fight it." The next day, according to the Breslin account, "Rickey stuffed religious tracts and clippings of talks he had given into a large envelope and sent it to Tuttle. It was the first of many. And it put Rickey into direct touch with a man he felt sure was going to change baseball."¹⁵⁷ Again, none of this is to suggest that Branch

¹⁵⁴ Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 75.

¹⁵⁵ Helgeland, 42.

¹⁵⁶ As apocryphal as this tale sounds, there really was a Charlie Thomas and he and Rickey really remained in touch for the rest of their lives; See Chris Lamb, "Did Branch Rickey Sign Jackie Robinson to Right a 40-Year Wrong?," *Black Ball* 6, no. 1 (Spring, 2013): 15, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/scholarly-journals/did-branch-rickey-sign-jackie-robinson-right-40/docview/1500924389/se-2?accountid=11311>.

¹⁵⁷ Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 76.

Rickey influenced a single word of Tuttle's bill, only that Ives-Quinn meant far more to him than he would later admit.

Rickey was not the only one in the winter of 1945 who saw that Ives-Quinn could help end baseball's race ban. As the calls for action against the Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants grew in the summer of 1945, Dan Dodson told a reporter that he and other members of the Mayor's Committee on Unity had anticipated that the new law "might bring about a showdown on the question of Negroes in major league baseball this year and picketing at the ballparks."¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the first suggestion that the law would force baseball to integrate appeared in the *Daily Worker* more than a month *before* the final vote took place in Albany. An article that ran in their sports pages on February 8th, 1945, urged its readers to write and wire their legislators to support "the Ives-Quinn bill which can end Jimcrow in baseball."¹⁵⁹

The following month, when the bill was ratified by New York State's legislators, Nat Low, a prominent voice in the *Daily Worker's* campaign to integrate baseball, gleefully took a victory lap:

The Ives-Quinn Anti-Discrimination Bill which was passed overwhelmingly in both the State Senate and Assembly heralds the end of Jimcrow in baseball—not only in New York State, to which the bill applies—but in all states and in all baseball leagues.

The final end of the Hitler-like ban on Negro players in our great National Pastime now is only a matter of time—and short time at that. Despite all the delaying efforts that may be employed by reactionary baseball magnates, the new bill guarantees that Negro ball players, who long ago proved their rights to be in the big leagues, will take their legitimate places alongside the Dixie Walkers, Mel Otts, and Hank Borowys.

¹⁵⁸ "Mayor Initiates Study of Negro Ban in Baseball," *New York Herald Tribune*, August 12, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

¹⁵⁹ "Write, Wire Albany," *Daily Worker*, February 8, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.i.ezproxy.nypl.org/historical-newspapers/february-8-1945-page-10/docview/1917199209/se-2?accountid=35635>.

Discrimination in employment because of race, creed or color is now unlawful in New York state and punishable by heavy fines.

And the law of our great state will be carried out, have no fear of that.

The last alibi of the anti-democratic elements in baseball has now been stripped from them and they will be forced to comply with the demands of the state and the millions of fans who make baseball possible.

The next steps will be taken by Negro ball players themselves who will undoubtedly apply formally for jobs with the three New York major league teams and many other clubs in the minor leagues.

These players must be taken to the various spring training camps, must be given thorough and impartial tryouts and must, after satisfying the managers, be signed to contracts for the 1945 season.

Their appearance in the big leagues will be heard around the world. Our fighting men, who have been spilling their blood on battlefields thousands of miles from home, will be inspired in the knowledge that while they are winning the fight for democracy overseas, we are winning it here at home.

And we can be doubly proud that it was our own state—New York—that showed the way.

Unfortunately, New York's FEPC, like America's, was not a magic wand, and the law would not officially take effect until July 1st. While Low was correct when he crowed that the new law "heralds the end of Jimcrow in baseball," his timeline was overly optimistic.¹⁶⁰ Still, Rickey seems to have put his plan to integrate the Brooklyn Dodgers into high gear almost immediately after the bill was signed.

According to his biographer, Lee Lowenfish, "Knowing that he now had state law on his side, Rickey turned to another part of the groundwork he was laying for his still-secret project and brought the Dodgers radio broadcaster Red Barber into his confidence."¹⁶¹ This talk began, as so many others did, with the story about poor Charlie

¹⁶⁰ Nat Low, "FEPC Heralds End of Jimcrow in Baseball," *Daily Worker*, March 7, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/march-7-1945-page-10/docview/1917196540/se-2?accountid=35635>.

¹⁶¹ Barber tells the story on camera in *Baseball: The National Pastime*.

Thomas, after which, the Deacon got to the point: “What I’m telling you is this: there is a Negro ballplayer coming to the Dodgers.... I don’t know who he is, and I don’t know where he is, and I don’t know when he’s coming, but he is coming soon, just as soon as we can find him.” Before Barber could interject Rickey continued, “I have taken you into my confidence in telling you this. I have talked about it only with my family [and they are] dead set against it. But I have got to do it. I must do it. I will do it. I am doing it. And now you know it.”¹⁶² Lowenfish explained that convincing Barber to stay with the team was not only important because he was beloved by the Brooklyn faithful, but because he was from the Deep South, where so many of the ballplayers in the Majors came from. If Rickey could not convince a college-educated Southerner to accept a Black player on the ballfield, what chance would he have to convince Dixie Walker or Pee Wee Reese to accept one in the locker room?

For our purposes, the most important thing about Rickey’s overture to Barber is the timing—it came about a week after Ives-Quinn was signed into law and he is quoted saying that he intended to sign a Black player just as soon as he found the right one.¹⁶³ However, despite Rickey’s heartfelt sermon on the evils of segregation and dramatic retelling of the Charlie Thomas story, the popular voice of the Brooklyn Dodgers left the meeting convinced that he would have to resign. He admitted that the idea of broadcasting an integrated baseball game initially appalled him. Eventually, Barber

¹⁶² Red Barber and Robert W. Creamer, *Rhubarb in the Catbird Seat* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 266-267.

¹⁶³ Lowenfish, *Baseball’s Ferocious Gentleman*, 359-361; it is from Barber’s account that we get Rickey’s memorable line to Clyde Sukeforth about the inevitability of Blacks in baseball in the film 42: “I don’t know who he is or where he is, but he is coming.”

decided to give it a try and thereby became one of millions of White Americans who had their attitudes about race transformed by Jackie Robinson.¹⁶⁴

A letter to Roy Wilkins, then the second-in-command at the NAACP, illustrates how the idea was taking hold that New York's lawmakers had somehow nullified Major League Baseball's race ban. Just two days after Dewey signed Ives-Quinn into law, *The Westminster Press* in Philadelphia reached out to Wilkins. Their letter began by reminding him that a month earlier he had informed them that it was correct to print in their texts that "Negroes are not admitted as players in professional baseball in the United States." But the author asked if, given the recent developments and how their materials would not appear in classrooms until July 1945, Wilkins still thought that the original statement was likely to be true?¹⁶⁵ We do not have the civil rights leader's reply, but those textbooks would be outdated in less than a year because of what some in the press were calling "the spirit of Ives-Quinn" that was rousing activists to action.¹⁶⁶

The try-out of Terris McDuffie and Dave "Showboat" Thomas with the Brooklyn Dodgers is a familiar chapter in the history of baseball's integration. Several days into what was to be the final spring training before integration, Joe Bostic, then the sports editor for the *People's Voice*, brought two aging Negro Leaguers to the Dodgers' spring training camp at Bear Mountain demanding they be given an equal opportunity to make the team.¹⁶⁷ Because the day's activities were in full swing when the group arrived, many

¹⁶⁴ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 54-55.

¹⁶⁵ Mary Van Dyke to Roy Wilkins, March 14, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

¹⁶⁶ One example of this phrase can be found in Councilman Schupler's public letter to Branch Rickey in Mehlman, "NY Assemblyman Raps Baseball JC," *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 14, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/ny-assemblyman-raps-baseball-jc/docview/531543719/se-2?accountid=11311>.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Rogers, "Joseph Bostic, 79, A Sports Journalist and a Disk Jockey," *New York Times*, June 2, 1988, <https://nyti.ms/34cY7eF>.

of the sports writers who regularly covered the team for the mainstream papers were on hand to witness the events.

It took almost four hours for Bostic, who refused to leave without speaking to Rickey, to get a private audience with him in the team cafeteria. The reporter recalled that behind closed doors the Deacon “cussed him out” and said he would consent to the tryouts but only to avoid charges of racism. Before they left the cafeteria, Rickey tearfully told Bostic the Charlie Thomas story and warned him, “I’m more for your cause than anybody else you know, but you are making a mistake using force. You are defeating your own aims.” Despite Rickey’s protests about being against segregation, Bostic left the meeting convinced that he would be the last baseball executive to buck baseball’s color line.¹⁶⁸

Rickey emerged from the cafeteria with Bostic and told the waiting press corps that he would give McDuffie and Thomas try-outs the following day. This prompted a White beat reporter to ask him if Ives-Quinn was the reason that he was consenting to what was immediately understood to be a historic first. As he would do months later, when news of Robinson’s signing broke, Rickey insisted “Ives-Quinn played no role in his personnel decisions and would not dictate who wore a Dodgers uniform.”¹⁶⁹ To bolster this point, he told the reports that he had *already* had two conversations with Mayor La Guardia about signing “Colored players.”¹⁷⁰ This is a tantalizing remark in light of Breslin’s claim that as Ives-Quinn was being debated, “Rickey took advantage of his own proximity to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia at a ceremony to speak with him about

¹⁶⁸ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 45-46.

¹⁶⁹ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 249-260.

¹⁷⁰ *New York Daily Mirror*, April 7, 1945; as cited in Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 251.

the importance of the bill in Albany,” only to discover that the mayor was already supporting it.¹⁷¹

As far as the try-outs that took place the next day, the conventional narrative suggests that the two Black players, who were already on the downside of their careers, were unimpressive. In fact, Bostic himself explained that this was because he had had difficulty recruiting better players because so many “were actually afraid to buck the establishment.”¹⁷² Actually, while the aging Thomas did not show much, a White reporter for the *New York Post*, Stanley Frank, quotes an unnamed team official who told him that McDuffie was “probably the best pitcher the pitcher-poor Dodgers had in camp during their training period.” Moreover, Rickey said of the Newark Eagles veteran, “I want to see more of this pitcher,” and even discussed contract terms with him.¹⁷³ Several weeks later, Low of the *Daily Worker* pressed Rickey as to why he had still not signed McDuffie, who had been so impressive in his audition. Then the reporter reminded him that the Dodgers, Giants, and Yankees would be in violation of Ives-Quinn if they did not sign Black players.¹⁷⁴ They seemed to already know this—as we shall discuss later, MacPhail, Stoneham and Rickey had some kind of private discussions in the late winter or early spring about how they might coordinate a response to Ives-Quinn.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Breslin, *Branch Rickey: A Life*, 77.

¹⁷² Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 45.

¹⁷³ Stanley Frank, “Why Did Dodgers Fail to Hire Negro Star?,” *New York Post*, April 18, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame. Digital Collections Portal. <https://collection.baseballhall.org>; the title of this article in a mainstream paper reflects how oblivious much of White America was to the existence of Major League Baseball’s unwritten rule to not sign African Americans.

¹⁷⁴ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 259; though he never said as much, the Dodger president did sign McDuffie to play for his Brooklyn franchise in a new Negro League he was about to launch; “McDuffie to Pitch for Brooklyn,” *Negro Sporting News*, April 25, 1945, 1.

¹⁷⁵ Larry MacPhail to A.B. Chandler, April 27, 1945, Papers of A.B. Chandler, Confidential Letters, Box 161, University of Kentucky Libraries, Lexington, Kentucky.

The historic Bear Mountain tryouts reflect the heightened expectations for change in New York brought about by Ives-Quinn. Despite Rickey's protests to the contrary, several stories about this event mention the law. Most of these appear in Black publications, such as the *Cleveland Call and Post* which placed a subtitle over their story about the tryouts which read, "Dodger President Branch Rickey Avoids Sting of New York's Anti-Race Discrimination Ban."¹⁷⁶ But Frank, writing for the mainstream *New York Post*, framed the event as "the first application [by Black ballplayers] testing the States new anti-bias law." His reporting concluding with the warning that "Negro groups are ready to go to court, if necessary, to break down organized baseball's traditional discrimination against colored players [and the owners] are beginning to squirm now that the heat has been put to them."¹⁷⁷

Less than two weeks after the Dodgers made headlines by giving tryouts to Black ballplayers, a councilman in Boston, Isadore Muchnick, was emboldened by the historic events at Bear Mountain. In heavily Catholic Boston, a special permit was annually granted to the city's ballclubs to allow them to play on Sundays. Now, Muchnick, who had first called for Boston's two big league teams to integrate in 1943, insisted he would block the Sunday waiver for the Red Sox and the Braves unless they followed Rickey's lead and tried out Black ballplayers—and this time, Wendell Smith, the Black sports reporter who was leading a pressure campaign against the Major Leagues, would be

¹⁷⁶ Bob Williams, "Dodgers' Tryouts May Pave Way for Negroes in Majors!," *Cleveland Call and Post*, April 14, 1945, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/clowns-get-best-baseballweek/docview/184114014/se-2?accountid=11311>.

¹⁷⁷ Frank, "Why Did Dodgers Fail to Hire Negro Star?"

choosing the players.¹⁷⁸ McDuffie and Thomas were just the best players that Bostic could convince to crash the Dodger camp on short notice, but Smith got the *Pittsburgh Courier* to pay the players' expenses and give them a stipend.¹⁷⁹ Thus, he was able to convince three solid prospects to accompany him to Boston. Marvin Williams' career batting average in the Negro National League was .376, while Jackie Robinson and Sam Jethroe would both go on to win Rookie of the Year Awards after their first seasons in the Major Leagues.¹⁸⁰

While Rickey, Durocher, and the rest of the Dodger high command personally worked out McDuffie and Thomas, the Red Sox made little effort to disguise the fact their tryout was a sham. They never gave the players uniforms for their on-field activities (unlike the Dodgers), and had high school pitchers throwing batting practice. At one point, a team official—either the owner Tom Yawkey, the general manager Eddie Collins, or the manager Joe Cronin, yelled out from the stands in a nearly empty Fenway Park, “get those n-s off the field.”¹⁸¹ Still, the charade was enough to force Isadore Muchnick's hand; the Boston Red Sox got their permit and their way—Yawkey's club

¹⁷⁸ Seth Maxon, “The Curse of Jackie Robinson,” *Slate*, May 4, 2017, <https://slate.com/culture/2017/05/the-red-sox-couldve-signed-jackie-robinson-they-gave-him-a-sham-tryout-instead.html>; Robinson was reluctant to participate in what he saw as a sham, but went at the urging of Smith, who had brought national attention to his court martial trial; Muchnick and Robinson would remain close friends for the rest of their lives.

¹⁷⁹ Lowenfish, *Branch Rickey: Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman*, 363.

¹⁸⁰ “Jackie Robinson,” BaseballReference.com, accessed November 11, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/r/robinja02.shtml>; “Sam Jethroe,” BaseballReference.com, accessed November 11, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/j/jethrsa01.shtml>; “Marvin Williams,” BaseballReference.com, accessed November 11, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/register/player.fcgi?id=willia009mar>.

¹⁸¹ Maxon, “The Curse of Jackie Robinson”; Muchnick and Robinson began a life-long friendship that afternoon at Fenway Park.

would be the last team to integrate in 1959, when Pumpsie Green made his debut at Fenway Park.¹⁸²

On his return trip to Pittsburgh, Smith made an unscheduled but fateful detour to Brooklyn to tell the Dodgers' general manager how Robinson had smashed balls all over Fenway Park. According to his account, Rickey exclaimed, "Jackie Robinson! I knew he was an All-American football player and an All-American basketball player, but I didn't know he played baseball."¹⁸³ The Deacon's office was nicknamed the "cave of the winds" by sportswriters because he blew so much hot air.¹⁸⁴ It seems unimaginable that despite his organization's efforts to scout the Negro Leagues and his own habitual scouring of their box scores, Rickey was unaware that one of the best athletes in the country had signed to play alongside the legendary Satchel Paige in Kansas City.¹⁸⁵ After dutifully telling Smith about Charlie Thomas and how much he hated segregation, he asked that the Black sportswriter send reports on Jackie during the season. Typical of Rickey's attention to the smallest detail and his obsession with secrecy, he instructed Smith to refer to Robinson in his reports only as "the young man from the West."¹⁸⁶

Though Robinson was far better known in the sports pages of the Black press when Smith visited Rickey, White sports fans would likely have heard of him. A crowd of 98,200 fans at Chicago's Soldier Field saw the University of California, Los Angeles

¹⁸² "Pumpsie Green," BaseballReference.com, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/players/g/greenpu01.shtml>.

¹⁸³ Lee Lowenfish, *Branch Rickey: Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman*, 364.

¹⁸⁴ Mann, *Branch Rickey: American in Action*, 228.

¹⁸⁵ Peter Drier, "'White Fragility' Gets Jackie Robinson's Story Wrong," *Boston Review*, February 2, 2021, <https://bostonreview.net/articles/peter-dreier-getting-jackie-robinsons-story-wrong>; for an example as to how Robinson's heroics with the Kansas City Monarchs were getting him mentioned in the same breath as Satchel Paige, see Nat Low, "A Friend Writes of a Unique Game in Boston," *Daily Worker*, August 22, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/august-22-1945-page-10/docview/1917219218/se-2?accountid=35635>.

¹⁸⁶ Lowenfish, *Baseball's Ferocious Gentleman*, 364.

(UCLA) star score a dramatic touchdown in a 1940 exhibition game between the nation's college All-Americans and a Chicago Bears team that had just won the National Football League (NFL) title game 73-0. Jackie was also the younger brother of Mack Robinson, a silver medalist-winning teammate of Jesse Owens at the 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin. He was also a National College Athletic Association (NCAA) track and field national champion in an era when college sports had far less competition from the pros for the public's attention.¹⁸⁷

Though baseball was his weakest sport, Jackie first played against a Major League team in a spring-training exhibition game in Pasadena in 1938. Afterwards, Jimmy Dykes, the Chicago White Sox manager, gushed, "If that Robinson kid was white, I'd sign him right now. No one in the American League could make plays like that."¹⁸⁸ When Robinson asked Dykes for a tryout with his club in 1942, the White Sox skipper relented. But because of his skin color, there was no chance that he could have been offered a contract by the club regardless of how well he performed on the field. Afterwards, Dykes privately told the two players who tried out, Robinson and Nate Moreland, that he and the other managers who wanted to sign Black ballplayers were prevented from doing so by "an unwritten law" among the owners that was enforced by Commissioner Landis. The White Sox manager even admitted to a reporter from the *Pittsburgh Courier* covering the work out that Jackie was worth \$50,000 to a Major

¹⁸⁷ Larry Lester, "Fifty Fast Facts on Jackie Robinson," accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.larrylester42.com/50-fast-facts-on-jr.html>; Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 116; Robinson's football exploits with UCLA, as well as his touchdown against the Bears, occasionally appeared in newsreels across the nation. His scoring play against the Bears can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/OKco4B29cRI>.

¹⁸⁸ Lester, "Fifty Fast Facts on Jackie Robinson."

League team. Still, despite praising Robinson, he was unwilling to have his photo taken with him.¹⁸⁹

“If We Can Stop Bullets, Why Not Balls?”

Just ten days after the Bear Mountain tryouts, a protest by Black veterans outside the Yankee home opener was considered so newsworthy that even the *New York Times* (the last paper anyone researching baseball’s integration should look for contemporaneous reporting) found it “fit to print.” According to the *Times*, there were about twenty Black protesters marching around the stadium with signs that read “If We Can Pay, Why Can’t We Play,” and “If We Can Stop Bullets, Why Not Balls.” One of the organizers told the *Times* “although 25 per cent of the Yankees’ attendance comprises Negroes, there are no Negro employees at the Stadium, either as players or as service personnel.”¹⁹⁰ Though Ives-Quinn is not mentioned specifically in the article, given that the protest was about hiring discrimination against people of color on and off the field, and given MacPhail’s comments to the *Baltimore Afro-American* two weeks earlier that he hoped that the new law would change things for Blacks in baseball, it is hard to imagine it did not come up when he met with the organizers prior to the game.

Having his triumphant return to baseball overshadowed by Black picketers targeting the Yankees’ home opener would prove to be a harbinger of things to come for MacPhail—and ironic given that one of his final acts with the Dodgers was glad-handing a delegation of activists demanding integration. The next day, MacPhail issued a press

¹⁸⁹ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 176.

¹⁹⁰ “Negroes Picket Stadium: Hit ‘Jim Crowism in Baseball’ as Yanks Start Campaign,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1945, <https://nyti.ms/3ruJNqy>.

release that proclaimed “statements that Negroes are not employed at the Yankee Stadium are absolutely false. Negroes are being employed at the Stadium—they have always been employed at the Stadium.” Ignoring the irrefutable accusation that the Yankees refused to hire Black ballplayers, he continued, “we have Negro employees in the grounds department, in the concession department, and in the offices.”¹⁹¹ MacPhail’s mendacity would only grow worse as the pressure for integration increased.

Surprisingly, some Black spectators did attend “lilywhite” Yankee games. For instance, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson famously sat in the dugout before games with his buddy, Babe Ruth, and even traveled with the team to Chicago during the 1932 World Series.¹⁹² But a non-scientific Google search for photos of the stands at Yankee home games during the 30s and 40s shows few non-white faces, and the claim by the Yankee Stadium protesters, that Black patrons made up 25 percent of the team’s gate, seems made up. Still, records indicate that the organization earned about \$100,000 a year leasing its four ballparks to Negro League teams.¹⁹³ If this figure was accurate, and it came from the New York Yankees, the payroll for roughly half their big league roster in 1945 was paid by their Black tenants when the team was on the road.¹⁹⁴ Obviously, this arrangement provided a huge financial advantage and might help explain why, during the fourteen years the team rented out its stadium for Black baseball events prior to integration, the New York Yankees won the World Series seven times. Furthermore, it

¹⁹¹ “MacPhail Makes Denial: Yankees’ Head Says Negroes are Employed at Stadium,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1945, <https://nyti.ms/3GzLFCx>.

¹⁹² Bill Jenkinson, “Babe Ruth and the Issue of Race,” Babe Ruth Central,” accessed March 10, 2021, <http://www.baberuthcentral.com/babe-ruth-and-the-issue-of-race-bill-jenkinson>.

¹⁹³ “Report to Mayor Asks Equal Rights for Negro in Baseball,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1945, <https://nyti.ms/3J5SIVr>.

¹⁹⁴ “1945 New York Yankees Statistics,” BaseballReference.com, accessed July 20, 2021, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/NYY/1945.shtml>.

was widely and correctly assumed by MacPhail, Griffith and the other owners leasing to the Negro Leagues that once Major League Baseball integrated, they would wither and die.

Buyer's Remorse for MacPhail

Another important Goldilocks condition required for baseball to integrate fell into place in late 1944 with the death of Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis. The Czar of Baseball had spent almost a quarter of a century working behind the scenes to keep America's pastime White. But whenever his efforts to avoid addressing the "race problem" were unsuccessful, he proclaimed that Major League Baseball was open to anyone regardless of skin color. In any case, Landis was no more racist than the sixteen owners who hired him, and as historian Jim Kreuz has pointed out, after he died in November 1944, "there was no mad dash to sign colored players."¹⁹⁵

Given how Landis helped Major League Baseball avoid desegregating during his tenure, it is probably not a complete coincidence that the man picked to replace him on April 24, 1945, was a senator from a Jim Crow state who had opposed anti-lynching bills, proposals to ban the poll tax, and making the FEPC permanent. The election of Senator A. B. "Happy" Chandler to become the new commissioner was largely engineered by MacPhail who, as an owner of the league's flagship franchise, now found himself in a more influential position than in Brooklyn. However, if the Yankee boss saw his candidate as a firewall against integration, he would soon be sadly disappointed. Though Chandler was initially grateful to MacPhail and privately acknowledged the role he

¹⁹⁵ Jim Kreuz, "The Dodgers' First Choice Wasn't Jackie Robinson," *Black Ball: A Journal of the Negro Leagues*, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (Spring 2014): 122.

played in getting him elected, their relationship would eventually deteriorate and fracture.¹⁹⁶ In fact, after he left baseball, Chandler would claim his initial contract was not renewed by the owners because he did not stop integration. Indeed, he recreated himself toward the end of his life as the commissioner who defied the lords of baseball and forced them to let Robinson play.¹⁹⁷

The league meeting where Chandler was voted into the commissioner's office took place in Cleveland shortly after the Red Sox and the Dodgers had been forced to try out Black ballplayers to avoid charges of racism. Given the pressure building on Major League Baseball, it is not surprising that Black sportswriter Sam Lacy, long a thorn in the side of the White baseball establishment, was allowed to address the conclave. He had been the driving force behind the ill-fated league meeting in December of 1943, where the world-famous entertainer Paul Robeson made the case for integration to Landis and the league owners.¹⁹⁸ Having a Black communist lecture a room full of White capitalists about segregation did not generate the breakthrough in baseball's race ban that Lacy and the other activists were hoping for. Undeterred, Lacy continued to pressure the baseball establishment through letters and articles. Finally, inside the room with the owners, the reporter asked them to form an official committee to study integration.¹⁹⁹ Not only did they agree to his request in Cleveland but permitted him to be a member of it. For reasons

¹⁹⁶ Larry MacPhail to A.B. Chandler, April 27, 1945.

¹⁹⁷ Ira Berkow, "Where Did Happy Stand on Jackie?," *New York Times*, June 29, 1991, <https://nyti.ms/3LfEgfe>.

¹⁹⁸ Lacy later claimed that Robeson was personally selected by Landis to replace him because he was a communist, and he had to listen to the meeting through the transom. The incident was considered such a fiasco that Lacy sent a letter to Wilkins in which he apologized for dragging in the NAACP, and angrily explained that the whole thing had been "taken out of his hands by persons who have it in their power to do so"; Sam Lacy to Roy Wilkins, December 8, 1943, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Dreier, "Before Jackie Robinson: Baseball's Civil Rights Movement," in *Perspectives on 42*, ed. Bill Nowlin and Glen Sparks (Phoenix, AZ: Society for American Baseball Research, Inc., 2021), 33.

that I explain in more detail later, this group never met, but its very creation played a pivotal role in La Guardia's subsequent appointment in August of a special committee to investigate baseball's race ban.

It was shortly after returning from Cleveland that Rickey began mailing his counterparts copies of New York State's new anti-discrimination law, which would take effect July 1, 1945. His cover letters began blandly: "Here's a copy of the Quinn-Ives Law, related to prevention and elimination of practices of discrimination in employment and otherwise against persons because of race, creed, color, and national origin." Then he added cryptically, "It occurred to me that you might be interested in this." We have no indication as to whether this mailing was meant as a follow up to any discussions about the law that might have taken place at the league meetings.²⁰⁰ The only owner ever to publicly comment on receiving a copy of the law from Rickey was Cleveland's Alva Bradley. He told the *New York Times* that he had no idea why the Dodger president sent it, or "why he thought it necessary to point the subject out to me."²⁰¹ We can never be certain why Rickey thought so either but remembering how he exclaimed "They can't stop me now" after reading that Dewey had signed Ives-Quinn, these letters give us an idea who "they" were.

Just two days after Senator Chandler was announced as the next commissioner of baseball, he got some unpleasant news from the other chamber. Congressman Vito Marcantonio, Mayor La Guardia's former campaign manager and W.E.B. Du Bois's

²⁰⁰ Branch Rickey to John A. Zeller, May 3rd, 1945, posted on "Ives-Quinn Act," Dodgers Blue Heaven, accessed July 16, 2021, <http://www.dodgersblueheaven.com/2010/05/quinn-ives-act.html>.

²⁰¹ "Rickey Claims that 15 Clubs Voted to Bar Negroes from the Majors; Declares He Used Robinson Despite Action Taken at Meeting in 1945," *New York Times*, February 18, 1948, <https://nyti.ms/3LbhhC8>; Bradley's comments came in 1948, when he was the only active owner to go on the record with the press denying Rickey's claim that the rest of the league tried to block Robinson from being promoted to the Majors.

future lawyer in his 1951 trial, challenged Jim Crow in baseball on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. He announced his intention to introduce a resolution for his Department of Commerce to conduct hearings on the lack of African Americans in the Major Leagues in order to air “the whole subject of discrimination in baseball before a committee of Congress.” In his speech on April 26th, Marcantonio claimed that there were then Black players who were as good as Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb, and threatened to force “big league club owners and other officials to come down here and tell us why qualified players are not permitted to play.”²⁰² Prior to this, it was not unheard of for politicians in New York to raise the issue. For instance, State Senator Charles Perry introduced a non-binding resolution in Albany in 1939 that denounced baseball’s race ban as a violation of state law.²⁰³ But by threatening live hearings where owners would testify under oath in the United States Congress, Marcantonio had raised the stakes significantly. These public hearings could not only lead to forced integration but might expose the league’s highly lucrative antitrust exemption to public scrutiny.²⁰⁴ As much as the owners feared being forced to hire Black players, they feared an end to the system of economic bondage that their White players were forced to work under.

The day after Marcantonio called for hearings, and ten days after the opening day protest at Yankee Stadium, MacPhail wrote a letter to the newly elected Chandler in which he warned him that the “race issue” was becoming “increasingly serious and acute

²⁰² “Marcantonio Introduces Resolution Today to Probe Baseball Jimcrow,” *The Daily Worker*, April 26, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/april-26-1945-page-10/docview/1917197372/se-2?accountid=35635>.

²⁰³ Rodney, *Press Box Red*, 72.

²⁰⁴ Gabe Jaques, “What is MLB’s Antitrust Exemption? Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley Using Baseball’s Century-Old Golden Goose as Political Cudgel,” *USA Today*, April 21, 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/mlb/2021/04/13/mlb-antitrust-exemption-immunity-ted-cruz-josh-hawley-baseball-all-star-game/7211552002/>.

[and] is too big a problem to discuss in this letter.” But what little he was willing to put down on paper suggested that New York’s new anti-discrimination law was the cause:

The three New York clubs are in a critical position right now. Rickey, Stoneham, and I have been giving it thought and study. We can’t stick our heads in the sand and ignore the problem. If we do, we will have colored players in the minor leagues in 1945 and in the major leagues shortly thereafter.

This first sentence can *only* be interpreted as a reference to Ives-Quinn, as it would *only* impact “the three New York clubs.”²⁰⁵ However, Tygiel and a number of other historians have omitted the second sentence which suggested that the executives of the three New York teams were coordinating their response to the law.²⁰⁶

There is an even more intriguing sentence at the end of this paragraph that has thus far escaped scholarly scrutiny, “Rickey and I think we have a possible solution along the lines of cooperation in the establishment and operation of strong Negro Leagues.” This seems to suggest that the New York teams might avoid Ives-Quinn if the Major Leagues created and established their own Negro Leagues, and would cast doubt as to whether Rickey was at this point was only pursuing his own secret integration scheme. MacPhail concluded by asking Chandler to meet with him and Rickey about their “solution” as soon as he has gotten his office setup.²⁰⁷

Statements by both MacPhail and Rickey have to be weighed carefully. Given that this is a confidential communication, it is hard to imagine that this is completely made up. Moreover, we have articles by Black sportswriters, such as Fay Young, who suspected that such a “solution” might be in the works.²⁰⁸ Either way, Chandler remained

²⁰⁵ Larry MacPhail to A.B. Chandler, April 27, 1945.

²⁰⁶ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 42.

²⁰⁷ Larry MacPhail to A.B. Chandler, April 27, 1945.

²⁰⁸ Young, “We Won’t Stand For Any Bunk,” *Chicago Defender*, September 1, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/through-years/docview/492773826/se-2?accountid=11311>.

in the senate until the end of the year and did not assume the full-time duties of commissioner until after Rickey signed Robinson. It is possible but doubtful that he ever had a meeting with the New York-based owners about an Ives-Quinn workaround.

But even if Chandler had met with MacPhail and Rickey to consider their “solution,” there’s no telling how he would have reacted. Right after word first got out that he had been voted in as the next commissioner, Ric Roberts, a reporter for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, hurried down to Capitol Hill with several colleagues to see if he would talk to them about integrating the Majors. According to his account, the senator met with the African American newsmen immediately and greeted them warmly. It was to this delegation that he famously said, “If a black boy can make it on Okinawa and Guadalcanal, hell, he can make it in baseball.”²⁰⁹ Of course, Landis had publicly proclaimed teams were free to sign “Negro ballplayers” and was lauded for it, while privately policing baseball’s color line.²¹⁰ But Chandler doubled-down on his promise to Roberts, “once I tell you something, brother, I never change, you can count on me.”²¹¹ Shockingly, the man who sought to become George Wallace’s running-mate in 1968 actually seems to have been true to his word about letting Blacks into Major League Baseball in 1945.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 43.

²¹⁰ Joe Cumminsky, “Landis Steps to Bat for Negro Ball Players,” *P.M.*, July 17, 1942, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²¹¹ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 43.

²¹² Berkow, “Where Did Happy Stand on Jackie?”

“Social-Minded Drumbeaters”

The day after Marcantonio announced his plans for hearings, William Z. Foster, the head of the American Communist Party published a blistering attack on baseball's race ban in the *Daily Worker*. This was not simply his way of *owning* the capitalist oligarchs. As Lester Rodney relates in *Press Box Red*, Foster loved baseball.²¹³ Though the language Foster uses in his editorial is hyperbolic, every point is inarguable: he called out Major League Baseball as “one of the mainstays of Jimcrow” in American society and pointed out that the other major sports had already begun to integrate. He accused the baseball owners of resisting “this whole great movement to grant the Negro people the rights of full citizenship.” He spoke of the great optimism earlier in the spring “that this would be the season that those responsible for barring Negroes from big-time baseball, would finally yield to public pressure.” This seems like a reference to the passage of Ives-Quinn and the try-outs that followed several weeks afterwards. Finally, after concluding that nothing had actually changed, Foster called for “something substantial be done to wake up these narrow-minded bigots.” Specifically, he suggested that trade union committees start pressuring “the baseball moguls” to integrate and added, “it might also be a good idea [for baseball] to have a taste of the new FEPC law in this state against discrimination.”²¹⁴ Both would happen in the summer! It is no wonder that Rickey, MacPhail, and the baseball establishment saw the Popular Front that came together to integrate their sport as a communist plot.

²¹³ Rodney, *Press Box Red*, 7-8.

²¹⁴ William Z. Foster, “Baseball Magnates Still Insist on Jimcrow,” *The Daily Worker*, Friday, April 27, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/april-27-1945-page-7/docview/1917195546/se-2?accountid=35635>.

Communism was probably more acceptable in New York City than anywhere else in the country. It was not only where the *Daily Worker*, the American Communist Party's national paper was published, but a former editor, Ben Davis, Jr., was one of two communist members elected to the City Council during World War II.²¹⁵ Davis was a great champion of civil and economic rights in New York City. He fought for things like saving the five-cent subway fare, rent control, and laws to end discrimination in housing. Nationally, he battled to save the FEPC, ban the poll tax, and integrate the U.S. military. A *Daily Worker* editorial calling for his re-election claimed that he also played an important role in the passage of Ives-Quinn, both as an activist and through the resolution he pushed through the New York City Council that called for the creation of a "state FEPC."²¹⁶ After his state finally did get its own FEPC, Davis became a major figure in the pressure campaign against baseball's color barrier. In his autobiography, he described this period as "the height of the struggle to break down the iron curtain against Negroes in big league baseball."²¹⁷

On May Day, 1945, Davis proposed to make the integration of the Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants, a matter of public policy with his resolution "calling on the teams to admit qualified Negro as well as white players." His original draft demanded that both the Mayor and the state agency created to enforce Ives-Quinn investigate New York

²¹⁵ Martin Gottlieb, "Communists, and Even Republicans: The Golden Age of the City Council," *New York Times*, August 11, 1991, <https://nyti.ms/3sY0E63>.

²¹⁶ Howard Fast, "Davis Walks on Freedom's Road," *Daily Worker*, October 17, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/october-17-1945-page-6/docview/1917206224/se-2?accountid=35635>.

²¹⁷ Benjamin J. Davis, *Communist Councilman from Harlem* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 132

City's ball clubs for discrimination.²¹⁸ That verbiage was eliminated before the City Council passed the measure on June 6th, and Davis would later assert in his autobiography that this was done "to save the faces" of the owners.²¹⁹ Still, despite the removal of language demanding investigations, as I shall discuss in the next chapter, both groups would, under pressure from Davis and other progressives, launch inquiries after the law took effect on July 1st.

If Davis's goal was to draw national attention to the fact that New York's segregated baseball teams were now breaking state law, he succeeded. On May 13th, the *Atlanta Daily World* reported that "Councilman Ben Davis, Jr. has the village of Knickerbocker all a-dither with the news that he will be invited to a conference with Senator Albert (Happy) Chandler, the new baseball commissioner." According to the story, Chandler, who was still serving in the senate, responded to Davis's resolution in the New York City Council with a telegram urging him to set up a conference in New York. Moreover, the commissioner-elect "pledged his personal cooperation in helping New York to be the first state to honor Negroes entering the big time in baseball." Davis was a prominent civil rights lawyer in Atlanta before he moved to New York, so maybe he got an old friend to plant the story? Whether the article was true or not, the last line accurately reflected the zeitgeist: "The wind is blowing fastly and steadily in the July direction of the pointed New York enforcement of the recent state FEPC bill signed by Governor Dewey."²²⁰

²¹⁸ Harry Raymond, "Davis Bill Asks End of Baseball Jimcrow," *Daily Worker*, May 2, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/may-2-1945-page-3/docview/1917194970/se-2?accountid=35635>.

²¹⁹ Davis, *Communist Councilman*, 133.

²²⁰ Billy Young, "End of Baseball Jimcrow Sought By Ben Davis, Jr.," *Atlanta Daily World*, May 13, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/end-baseball-jimcrow-sought-ben-davis-jr/docview/490767631/se-2?accountid=11311>.

Rickey's "Subterfuge"

The same day that the Davis resolution was taken up by the City Council, Rickey held a press conference at the Dodgers' offices to introduce the new United States Baseball League and the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers. Other officials from the new Black circuit, including the legendary Negro League magnate Gus Greenlee, were also present but the Deacon, though careful to downplay his official involvement, was the center of attention. This prompted Leo Waldman of the *New York Herald* to write that Rickey, "although not officially connected with the new organization [was] undoubtedly the inspirational force." In his press conference, Rickey called the existing Negro Leagues rackets and promised that this new organization would be run in such an exemplary way that it could eventually be recognized as a minor league, and as such, its players would be subject to the Major League draft.²²¹

In the conventional history of baseball's integration, the Brown Dodgers were Rickey's brilliant smokescreen to explain his scouts attending Negro League games. For example, in the HBO dramatic film about the integration of baseball, *The Soul of the Game*, Rickey, played by Edward Hermann, tells his staff that the Brown Bombers are just his "Trojan horse to allow our scouts to get inside colored ballparks and conceal our real intention... to sign Negro ballplayers for us!"²²² One problem with this narrative is that Dodger scouts were already inside "colored ballparks" long before this new league began playing ballgames.²²³ In truth, there were some, such as the *Chicago Defender's* Fay Young, who openly worried in their columns that the Brown Dodgers might be

²²¹ Leo Waldman, "Negro league With Brooklyn Club Is Set Up," *New York Herald*, May 2, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame. Digital Collections Portal. <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²²² *The Soul of the Game*, directed by Kevin Rodney Sullivan (HBO Pictures, 1996).

²²³ Kreuz, "The Dodgers' First Choice Wasn't Jackie Robinson," 114-126.

Rickey's "subterfuge" to form a "Negro team operated by the owners of a major league club" in order "to answer to the demands of the Fair Employment Practices Committee of New York."²²⁴ Though Young may seem paranoid in hindsight, his suspicions align with MacPhail's private letter to Chandler, discussed earlier, about how he and Rickey had come up with a "solution" to the race problems the New York teams faced. Overall, the evidence suggests that the United States Baseball League was much more than a "Trojan horse."

Despite Rickey's attempts to present this new league and the Brown Dodgers as entities he had no actual stake in, Clark Griffith, owner of the Washington Senators, saw him as far more than a landlord. First, he wrote an angry letter to William Harridge, President of the American League, with copies going out to the other teams in both circuits. In it he refers to Rickey as an organizer of the new league which has issued a "join or die" threat to the teams in the existing Negro Leagues.²²⁵ Two days later, he took his beef public, telling the press that "he challenged the right of Branch Rickey to set himself up as a 'dictator' of Negroes in baseball" and accused him of "attempting to destroy two well organized leagues which have been in existence for some time and in which colored people of this country have faith and confidence."²²⁶ As with the Yankees, the existing Negro Leagues were an important revenue stream for his Washington Senators.

²²⁴ Young, "We Won't Stand For Any Bunk."

²²⁵ Clark Griffith to William Harridge, May 14, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²²⁶ "Griffith Hits Rickey Negro Plan," *Chicago Herald-American*, May 16, 1945, Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal. <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Oddly, MacPhail, who had as much of a stake in the survival of his Negro League tenants as Griffith did, seems to have not weighed in against Rickey during this dispute with the other owners. This might indicate that he had some advance knowledge of the plan. Could this new Black league have been the scheme that MacPhail had wanted to discuss with Chandler? If so, perhaps at the last moment MacPhail got cold feet, or his silent partners, Dan Topping and Del Webb, objected. Either way, in the coming months MacPhail would champion Griffith's position, that the segregated Negro Leagues needed to be protected for the welfare of African Americans.²²⁷

Shortly after the baseball meetings in Cleveland where Chandler was selected to replace Landis, National League President Ford Frick wrote to Rickey to inform him that he had been chosen to represent the league "on the special committee to make a survey of the negro baseball situation."²²⁸ Two days later, his American League counterpart, Harridge, sent a similar letter to MacPhail requesting that he represent their circuit.²²⁹ In his letters to Lacy, the Dodger general manager appears to have been enthusiastic. At one point Rickey wrote back that he believed that he had convinced the president of Howard University to join their committee.²³⁰ Meanwhile, the Yankee president ignored Lacy's letters and telegrams and even tried on one occasion to get Harridge to replace him with another owner. Due entirely to MacPhail's stalling and petulant demands, this Lacy group

²²⁷ Bryan Soderholm-Difatte, "How Major League Owners Justified Opposition to Integration in 1946," Seamheads.com, accessed September 8, 2021, <https://seamheads.com/2014/09/09/how-major-league-owners-justified-opposition-to-integration-in-1946>.

²²⁸ Ford Frick to Branch Rickey, May 2, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²²⁹ William Harridge to Larry MacPhail, May 4, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²³⁰ Branch Rickey to Larry MacPhail, June 15, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

never actually met.²³¹ Moreover, his behavior foreshadowed his later attempts to sabotage the Mayor's Committee on Baseball—a task force that the mayor ironically agreed to create largely because it would feature Rickey and MacPhail who, he was led to believe, were then working on resolving “the negro baseball situation” on behalf of Major League Baseball.²³²

²³¹ Larry MacPhail to William Harridge, June 2, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²³² Dan Dodson, “Organization Meeting of Mayor's Committee on Discrimination in Baseball Minutes, 1945 August 22, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Chapter IV.

The Ives-Quinn Uprising

This chapter looks at the creation of the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee several weeks before Ives-Quinn took effect, and how it quickly grew into a pressure group that was feared by New York City's mayor and its professional baseball teams. After detailing this organization's tactics and plans to force the Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants to desegregate, I explore efforts to stop their protests by Fiorello La Guardia through his Mayor's Committee on Unity. This section concludes by introducing the investigation of the city's professional baseball clubs by New York State for violating its new law against workplace discrimination.

The End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee

When Dodson later described the climate in New York City on the eve of baseball's integration, he put the pressure campaign created by the Metropolitan Interfaith and Interracial Coordinating Council front and center. "In the spring of 1945," he later wrote, "a new pressure group was formed in New York City called the 'End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee.' They were holding street meetings and receiving considerable publicity."²³³ The first record of this group I found comes in the form of a mass-mailing on June 7th from its chairman Murray A. Meyerson. The letter, addressed "Dear Friend," proclaims the creation of an as yet unnamed "city-wide campaign to end the undemocratic exclusion of qualified Negro ballplayers from the major leagues." It

²³³ Dan Dodson, "The Integration of Negroes in Baseball," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* (New York, N.Y.) 28, no. 2 (1954): 74, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2263823>.

calls baseball's color line "a shameful vestige of second-class citizenship [that] violates the Ives-Quinn Fair Employment Practices law, which forbids discrimination in various industries because of race, color, or creed." Recipients were urged to sign and return the included postcards in order to become part of their campaign which, the letter claimed, already enjoyed the support of the CIO.²³⁴ They were one of the nation's larger labor federations and had not only organized similar movements to integrate baseball in the past but in 1942 had tried to help Bill Veeck buy the Philadelphia Phillies and stock the team with Black stars.²³⁵ In 1945, they were also lending their strength to push Congress to make the FEPC permanent and pass anti-lynching legislation. Davis would later write that one of the reasons the campaign to integrate baseball was effective in 1945 was because "the trade union movement took it up in a big way."²³⁶ Indeed, their vast logistical network would help explain how, just eleven days after their initial mailing went out, an "End Jim Crow in Baseball" organizing meeting was held at the Manhattan Center.²³⁷ Though you probably will not find this gathering in any history book, it was a significant moment in the *real* history of baseball's integration.

A news report appeared in the *Daily Worker* on June 18th stating that the organizers of that evening's assembly hoped to "set up a permanent committee which will fight to get Negro players in baseball this season [that would be] supported by the

²³⁴ Murray A. Meyerson to Friend, June 7, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²³⁵ Dreier, "'White Fragility' Gets Jackie Robinson's Story Wrong."

²³⁶ Davis, *Communist Councilman from Harlem*, 102.

²³⁷ One presumes a gathering of this size took place in the famed Hammerstein Ballroom at the Manhattan Center, which was built by Oscar Hammerstein I, the father of one of the sponsors of the movement. The center had long since passed out of the Hammerstein family when it became a meeting place in the spring and summer for the coalition to desegregate the Major Leagues. Sadly, we have no record of how the Metropolitan Interfaith group, later rebranded as the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, was able to secure use of this prized location for their meetings. I find it ironic to be writing about this venue now having attended so many concerts there in the 1980s.

Ives-Quinn Law, which goes into effect July 1st of this year.” The article added that the “Committee may bring the issue of baseball discrimination into the courts.”²³⁸ Among those who attended that night were reporters from the *Daily Worker*, which had been leading the fight to end segregation in Major League Baseball for many years. Fittingly, it was their sportswriter, Nat Low, who briefed the gathering of labor, religious, and progressive activists on previous efforts to integrate baseball. He also stressed that the group should focus on a legal strategy because “once the case goes to court the club owners will be licked.”

Indeed, the courts probably seemed like the logical way to force integration with Ives-Quinn about to become the law of the land in New York State. Especially given the recent rulings of the Roosevelt Court, such as the striking down of Jim Crow primaries in *Smith v. Allright*, and the creation of a Civil Rights Section inside the Justice Department to prosecute violations.²³⁹ Also pushing the legal strategy that evening was the regional head of the FEPC, Edward Larson, who gave a presentation on “how to make a case before the Fair Employment Committee in connection with those Negroes trying out for big league clubs.” One “Negro” who just had tried out for the Brooklyn Dodgers, Showboat Thomas, told the gathering that he never once experienced prejudice playing

²³⁸ “Conference to Fight Jimcrow Meets Tonight,” *Daily Worker*, June 18, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/june-18-1945-page-10/docview/1917199470/se-2?accountid=35635>.

²³⁹ “Smith V. Allwright,” NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.naacpldf.org/case-issue/landmark-smith-v-allwright>; “Civil Rights Section, Department of Justice (1939),” *The Living New Deal*, July 7, 2021, <https://livingnewdeal.org/glossary/civil-rights-section-department-of-justice-1939>.

against Whites, and did not see why things would be any different if he were playing with them.²⁴⁰

Given the role that New York politics played in everything from the creation of the original FEPC through the signing of Jackie Robinson, it is worth noting the words of Michael Quill, founder of the Transport Workers Union of America and also a sponsor of the Citizens Committee to End Jim Crow in Baseball. He told the audience that there would be a hundred candidates running for office in New York City in the fall, and it would be essential to make them all take a position on baseball's race ban.²⁴¹ Along these lines, the importance of writing and calling elected representatives and government officials was also brought up during the evening.²⁴² In fact, shortly after the meeting, Meyerson himself wrote to Dodson calling for the Mayor's Committee on Unity to undertake an investigation of Jim Crow in baseball. We only have Dodson's reply, which was quick and to the point, "We appreciate your calling this to our attention and assure you that it will receive our sympathetic investigation."²⁴³ Dodson received a number of similar letters in the following weeks, many appear to have come from people with some kind of connection to the June 18th session.

The *New York Amsterdam News* coverage of this meeting featured the sub-headline: "Branch Rickey, MacPhail Under Barrage of Blows from Sports Editors." This

²⁴⁰ Jerome Mehlman, "Council Battling Jim Crow Baseball: City Father, Writers Tell of Conditions," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 30, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/council-battling-jim-crow-baseball/docview/226039118/se-2?accountid=11311>; comparing the list of sponsors of the two groups formed to end Jim Crow in baseball, it seems like many from the earlier movement came on board immediately. Given the CIO sponsored both efforts, perhaps new group inherited the mailing list from the old?

²⁴¹ Mehlman, "Council Battling Jim Crow Baseball," June 30, 1945.

²⁴² Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 22, 126.

²⁴³ Dan Dodson to Murray Meyerson, June 22, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

is probably a reference to the speech made by Joe Bostic, the reporter who ambushed the Dodger camp. He attacked all baseball's owners for their refusal to sign Blacks, but particularly singled out MacPhail and Rickey for criticism. Bostic's comments show us how, just a few months before Rickey would become baseball's answer to Abraham Lincoln, sportswriters who actually covered baseball's color line saw little daylight between his position on race and MacPhail's. Prophetically, the *Amsterdam News* article on the meeting ended with the observation, "We have seen quite a few outfits try to break down the color bars present in baseball, but can say with authority, that this new committee appears to be the strongest by far."²⁴⁴ Given that there had already been some extremely impressive movements that failed to desegregate the Major Leagues, I suspect that the author's optimism comes from the fact that the organizers of this group were planning to go after Jim Crow in baseball because it was illegal, rather than just because it was immoral.

Though Councilman Davis was not at the Manhattan Center meeting, he was one of the speakers the following week at the Negro Freedom Rally held at Madison Square Garden. It is hard to imagine an event of this nature taking place anywhere but New York City back in the 1940s. Almost 20,000 mostly Black spectators packed the Garden on the night of June 25, 1945, to see some of America's biggest Black performing artists, including Paul Robeson, and listen to speeches given by some of the country's most prominent Black political figures. Besides Davis, the speakers included Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Mary MacLeod Bethune.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Mehlman, "Council Battling Jim Crow Baseball," June 30, 1945.

²⁴⁵ "Fight on Bias Cannot Wait, Powell Tells Freedom Rally," *Daily Worker*, June 26, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/june-26-1945-page-3/docview/1917198264/se-2?accountid=35635>.

The Negro Freedom Rally began two years earlier as a way for the Black community to wave the flag and support the war effort.²⁴⁶ Now, with Hitler defeated and the Japanese Empire crumbling, the theme of 1945's rally was saving the national FEPC. President Truman sent a message that was read aloud to the crowd calling on Congress to allow the bill to establish a permanent FEPC, which was then trapped in committee, to be put to a vote. In addition, the chairman of the FEPC, Malcolm Ross, came up from Washington to address the crowd. There was also a speech by an official from the CIO talking about their efforts on behalf of a permanent FEPC.²⁴⁷ But Davis had more than saving the FEPC on his mind. Before he finished his speech, he called "upon the State FEPC, which goes into effect on July 1, to take up immediately the fight to eliminate Jimcrow in professional baseball."²⁴⁸ This comment serves as another reminder that the integration of Major League Baseball was viewed by the early civil rights movement as an important steppingstone on the road to racial equality.

Ives-Quinn Takes Effect

The Mayor's Committee on Unity's investigation of the Dodgers, Yankees, and Giants began several days after the law took effect with identical letters from Dodson to the executives of each club. He began by acknowledging the efforts of the nascent End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee obliquely: "As you know, several pressure groups in the community have been very active to get Negro players on the Major League ball clubs." Dodson then explained how "several of them have petitioned the Mayor's

²⁴⁶ "Unity is Demanded at Negro Freedom Rally," *New York Times*, June 8, 1943, <https://nyti.ms/3sy1TbL>.

²⁴⁷ "Fight on Bias," June 26, 1945.

²⁴⁸ "Fight on Bias," June 26, 1945.

Committee on Unity to make an investigation of the problem with a view to seeing what can be done about it.” This appears to be an understatement. Dodson seems to have been barraged with letters from groups and individuals, a number of whom mention that they were at the Manhattan Center meeting. He concluded his letter to the chief executives of the three New York teams by asking that they grant him an interview at their earliest convenience to discuss this matter.²⁴⁹ The only reply I have located is Rickey’s. Given the historic nature of his first meeting with Dodson, it is not surprising that a copy of his acceptance letter is in the archives of the National Baseball Hall of Fame.²⁵⁰

The letters to Dodson demanding that the Mayor’s Committee on Unity take action against New York’s baseball teams generally argued that they were violating the new law. A perfect example can be found in this letter from the Social Service Employees’ Union, which began, “In recognition of the democratic rights of all people as guaranteed by the Federal constitution and the laws now existing in New York State, we feel it is incumbent upon all groups to desist from any form of discrimination.” Then the author got to the point: “We urge that the major league baseball teams abide by the spirit of the New York State Ives-Quinn Fair Employment Practices Law.” He goes on to demand an immediate investigation “of the major baseball league in New York City,” and insists that the local teams “immediately try out and hire qualified Negro baseball players.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Dan Dodson to Larry MacPhail, July 6, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²⁵⁰ Branch Rickey to Dan Dodson, July 10, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²⁵¹ Tessie Bregman to Dan Dodson, July 24, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Jewish groups were not only strong supporters of Ives-Quinn, which was meant to stop employment discrimination based on race *and* religion, but were extremely supportive of efforts to integrate baseball, and African American rights.²⁵² This is reflected in a letter sent to Dodson just two days after the law took effect from the Executive Secretary of the National Committee to Combat Anti-Semitism.

It seems unfortunate that Negro discrimination is most obvious in our national pastime where fair play is supposed to be of the essence. The big-league teams, although ostensibly having no rule against the use of Negro ballplayers, nevertheless studiously avoid putting them under contract.

In New York City, the home of three major league ball teams, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the New York Yankees, and the New York Giants, this condition is intolerable.

Under the New York State FEPC Bill, we should be able to take steps to remedy this condition. However, the Mayor's Committee on Unity is in a position to render an outstanding service to the people of New York by using its good offices to see that this discrimination is no longer continued.²⁵³

The aforementioned Bill Veeck, Jr., the owner of the Cleveland Indians, the second team to integrate, commented that Brooklyn was the perfect city for baseball's great experiment because it was the most hospitable to Blacks—translation: it was almost 40 percent Jewish.²⁵⁴

Shortly after New York's new anti-bias law came into effect, a Jewish assemblyman from Brooklyn, Phillip J. Schupler, wrote a tongue-in-cheek fan letter to Rickey in response to his signing of Babe Herman who, at 42, had not appeared in the Major Leagues since 1937:

²⁵² Stephen H. Norwood and Harold Brackman, "Going to Bat for Jackie Robinson: The Jewish Role in Breaking Baseball's Color Line," *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 1 (1999): 130, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43611720>.

²⁵³ Leonard Golditch to Dan Dodson, July 3, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²⁵⁴ Norwood, "Going to Bat for Jackie Robinson," 130.

Now I don't wish to criticize the estimable Babe, whose abilities to catch a baseball with his head has endeared him to all true Brooklyn fans. However, in your search for talent, I might suggest a source which would be more productive than the various homes for the aged which you have been scouting. There are many talented and able colored ball players available who would insure the pennant for the Dodgers.

The letter took a more serious turn when Assemblyman Schupler, who had voted for Ives-Quinn, subtly reminded Rickey about the law:

I am sure that the people of my district believe with me that you would enhance not only the efficiency and ability of the team by hiring some colored ball players, but that you would also increase the prestige of the Brooklyn ball club by showing that you really believe in the spirit of the Ives-Quinn law.

Schupler concluded by pointing out that there were no Black voters in his district, which would make his comments that much more heartfelt.²⁵⁵ As far as Rickey, he might have seen this letter as a veiled threat that the state government was going to watching his future transactions, or it may have reassured him that Brooklyn would support him when he finally put his plan into action.

The March on Baseball Movement

One result of the Manhattan Center session on June 18th was the creation of a "continuance committee" that was to have their first meeting on June 26th. It was either there or at a subsequent gathering that does not appear in the historical record, where the group rebranded itself as the End Jim Crow in Baseball Campaign. Ben Goldstein, a member of the Metropolitan Interfaith executive committee and the American Jewish Congress, was named campaign chairman. One of his first actions appears to have been a personal appeal to La Guardia asking him to be the "honorary chairman" of the End Jim

²⁵⁵ Mehlman, "NY Assemblyman Raps Baseball JC," July 14, 1945.

Crow in Baseball Committee. Goldstein opened his letter to the mayor of July 18th by praising him, as Randolph had done earlier, for being a “forthright fighter for fair play and equal rights for all Americans.”²⁵⁶ Still, the mayor did not reply. Instead, he forwarded the letter to Charles E. Hughes, Jr., Chairman of the Mayor’s Committee on Unity, and tersely directed him to “investigate and report.”²⁵⁷

On July 19th, Goldstein sent out a mass-mailing, still on the Metropolitan Interfaith letterhead, to all those who had filled out and returned the earlier cards informing them that “the campaign our organization initiated to end discrimination against Negro ballplayers has met with an enthusiastic response” and that “people from all walks of life have emphatically declared their eagerness to help fight the undemocratic refusal of the major baseball leagues to hire Negro players.” As a result of this, “an End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee [has been] established, under broad sponsorship, to carry through to a successful conclusion the fight to see that this discrimination is ended.” The recipients were then asked to sign and return the postcards that came with the letter to authorize the use of their names as sponsors. Within a matter of weeks, these would be returned by a who’s who of prominent progressives, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Paul Robeson, Vito Marcantonio, Algernon Black, Stella Adler, Langston Hughes, Canada Lee, Oscar Hammerstein, II, Ben Davis, Jr., Rockwell Kent, and Max Yergan.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Ben Goldstein to Fiorello La Guardia, July 18, 1945, Subject Files: Baseball, 1945 July-August, Box 21, Folder 11, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

²⁵⁷ Memo from Fiorello La Guardia to Charles Hughes, July 30, 1945, Departmental Correspondence, Box 3353, Folder 6, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

²⁵⁸ Ben Goldstein to Friend, August 6, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Several days later, Goldstein struck again with a mailing that requested support from organizations. One such appeal is in the NAACP files. Though the verbiage appeared boilerplate, it made its way to Roy Wilkins desk with the hand-written message: “Roy, you may want to do something about this letter.”²⁵⁹ The NAACP did not appear to throw the same energy behind Goldstein’s group as they had with the Citizens Committee to End Jim Crow in Baseball in 1942. Its leader, Walter White, attended some of those sessions, and when he was unavailable, he directed top deputies, including Marshall and Wilkins, to represent the NAACP in his place.²⁶⁰ In contrast, there is no record of White sending representatives to any of the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee’s meetings. Still, when the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee’s letterhead made its first appearance on August 6th, the “National Association for the Advancement of Colored People” appeared in the “endorsed by” section at the bottom.²⁶¹

The letter that Goldstein sent to his supporters on July 26th seems to have turned him into a Harrison Bergeron-like figure in the minds of City Hall and the baseball establishment. It called for “mass demonstrations outside both Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds, which will be continued in the ballparks.”²⁶² The conventional narrative mentions the threats of protests *outside* stadiums, but the original End Jim Crow in Baseball Day announcement makes clear that protests were intended to move inside once the games began. Even if the demonstrators did not swarm onto the field and violence did not breakout, all the chants and catcalls to end segregation in the Majors would be carried

²⁵⁹ Ben Goldstein to Norma Jensen, July 23, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

²⁶⁰ Walter White to Catherine Freeland, September 9, 1942.

²⁶¹ Ben Goldstein to Friend, August 6, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

²⁶² Ben Goldstein to Friend, July 26, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

live over the radio. This would be acutely embarrassing for a national institution that did not even admit to being segregated.

The Two Faces of Dan

When Dan Dodson died in 1995, the *New York Times* called him “one of the nation’s leading advocates of racial equality.” Among his achievements, according to his obituary, was working behind the scenes with Rickey in 1945 to “break baseball’s color barrier.” As was stated earlier, he had been in charge of New York University’s Center for Human Relations Studies before La Guardia convinced him to take a leave of absence and become the Executive Director of the Mayor’s Committee for Unity.²⁶³ It was in that capacity that he met Rickey and MacPhail shortly after Ives-Quinn took effect. While he was hailed by the *Times* for his good works, some of the mendacity that made those two baseball executives so good at their jobs seems to have rubbed off on him. As we shall see, this included keeping crucial details about his meetings with Rickey and MacPhail from the mayor and his colleagues on the committee.

Responding to an urgent telegram from the Giants about the planned protests, La Guardia set up a meeting for July 27th with the two leaders of his Unity Committee, Dodson and Hughes.²⁶⁴ A follow-up letter from the Giants to the mayor made clear that they “were not interested in what happens outside the Park,” but with the danger to their fans when “approximately 2,000 persons...carry on a demonstration inside” the Polo

²⁶³ Robert Thomas, Jr., “Dan W. Dodson, 88, Foe and Scholar of Racism,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1995, <https://nyti.ms/3HxzMym>.

²⁶⁴ “Dodson Urges N.Y. Ball Clubs to Hire Negroes,” *New York Herald Tribune*, March 8, 1948, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Grounds during their scheduled double-header against the Chicago Cubs.²⁶⁵ It was prior to this emergency meeting with the mayor that Dodson provided Hughes with a detailed summary of his recent interviews with the Yankee and Dodger executives that blended fiction with fact.

In Dodson's official summary of his meeting with MacPhail, the Yankee owner came off as affable and open to integration, albeit done in a thoughtful, deliberate manner. The memo mentions that MacPhail gave himself credit for raising the issue of "Negro players" at the league meeting in April and that he and Rickey were subsequently appointed by their leagues "to work the problem out" in a special committee. The baseball executive's assessment was that there were then about ten Negro League players who could play in the Major Leagues, but they were aging, and his chief concern was training younger Black prospects so they could become future assets to big league clubs. He also volunteered to Dodson that the Yankees earned \$100,000 annually renting their facilities to the Negro Leagues. However, he was described as unconcerned about losing revenue due to integration because he claimed it would be offset by increased attendance. Finally, MacPhail was quoted saying that while he did not see any problem with the Yankees accepting Black players onto their roster, it was possible that the team might face "reprisals from other clubs, particularly with regard to schedules and so forth."²⁶⁶

The account of Dodson's first meeting with MacPhail that he shared in 1954 was radically different from the version he presented to his colleague in 1945. Apparently, the Yankee boss was belligerent and lectured him:

²⁶⁵ Edgar P. Feeley to Fiorello La Guardia, August 9, 1945, Box 3383, Folder 11, LaGuardia & Wagner Archives, La Guardia Community College.

²⁶⁶ Memorandum from Dan Dodson to Charles Hughes, July 27, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

‘You d--d professional do-gooders know nothing about baseball. It is a business. Our organization rented our parks to the Negro leagues last year for about \$100,000. That is our return we made on our investment. The investment of the Negro Clubs is also legitimate. I will not jeopardize my income nor their investment until some way can be worked out whereby it will not hurt the Negro Leagues for the major leagues to take an occasional player of theirs.’ He had no suggestion, however, as to how this could be done.

This account concluded with Dodson’s opinion, “I am convinced that without the intelligence, personality, and dedication of a Rickey, it would have been very hard, indeed, to have successfully crashed the color line in baseball.”²⁶⁷ As far as which of Dodson’s accounts we should believe, it should be noted that by the time this version of his meeting with MacPhail was written in 1954, he and Rickey had become quite close. How close? Well, when the Dodger boss had a contract dispute with his Rookie of the Year in 1948, Dodson was flown down to spring training to meet with Jackie and Rachel Robinson. Also, before Robinson testified against Paul Robeson in a hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee on July 18, 1949, Rickey had Dodson rewrite a statement that he had drafted.²⁶⁸ Meanwhile, MacPhail was out of baseball and at war with Rickey when Dodson released the unflattering account of their meeting.

As far as his first meeting with Rickey, the account that Dodson fed Hughes was just as problematic. In some ways, the Rickey in this memo was much like the man who presided over the Brown Dodgers press conference. That is, he insisted that the existing Negro League teams were rackets and should not be a part of any future solution. He also told Dodson about how he had been scouting Black baseball, but we get no hint if this is related to the Brown Dodgers, or because Rickey hoped to sign them for the Brooklyn

²⁶⁷ Dodson, “Integration of Negroes in Baseball,” 74-75.

²⁶⁸ Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson*, 156 and 166; Dodson told Frommer that Jackie wrote his own draft, with the help of Lester Granger of the Urban League which, he opined, was superior to the one he and Rickey had produced.

Dodgers. The only thing that jumps out of this memo is that it was Rickey himself who suggested that the mayor form a committee to study the integration of baseball.

Moreover, he thought that he and MacPhail should be on it because they had already been designated by their leagues. Dodson obviously liked the idea because his minutes state that the two concluded their time together bandying names back and forth, and he noted that both agreed it would be ideal if the mayor could convince a “Rockefeller” to serve on the committee.²⁶⁹

But the version of this meeting that Dodson later told Harvey Frommer for his 1982 book *Rickey and Robinson: The Men Who Broke Baseball’s Color Barrier* is so different from what he shared with his colleague in 1945 that it puts his veracity into question. According to the more recent account, the Deacon had done a thorough investigation of Dodson and the Mayor’s Committee on Unity before their meeting on July 26th, and spent their first half hour together drilling him with questions until he was finally satisfied that they could work together. At that point, Rickey told his visitor the Charlie Thomas story and then added that he had promised himself in that hotel room that when the time finally came that he could do something about segregation, he would.

Now, I am ready. I have gone way out on a limb. I have taken a great deal of abuse. They have pilloried me in the press and the Negro community. They do not know that I created the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers as a subterfuge to mask my true intentions—to scout Negro players without tipping my hand.

And then, according to Dodson, Rickey actually told him that “Jackie Robinson” was the player he had settled on to break baseball’s color line. Never mind that Dodger scouts did not think he was nearly the best player in the Negro Leagues, Rickey explained that his

²⁶⁹ Dan Dodson to Charles Hughes, July 27, 1945, 2.

intelligence and college experience would make it easier for him to handle the pressure of being first.²⁷⁰

Keep in mind, this historic meeting between Rickey and Dodson occurred one month before Robinson came to Brooklyn and three months before his signing was announced. The reason Rickey gave in this encounter for not signing Robinson immediately was that he felt that there was much preparation that needed to be done in the community and with his ballclub. That part was Dodson's area of expertise and so he wanted his help planning Robinson's signing.²⁷¹ Having done extensive research on Dodson's background prior to their meeting, the Deacon knew that the mayor had put this professor into a position of leadership on his Unity Committee because he had gained a reputation for what fellow sociologist Robert Wallace described as a special ability to take "the emotion out of an emotional issue and replace it with reason." Moreover, Dodson had been mentored by activist James Weldon Johnson, so he had credibility in the Black community.²⁷² And yet, despite Dodson's extensive experience integrating segregated institutions, what Rickey most seemed to want from him was to "get this Committee (the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, which Rickey was convinced was Communist-inspired) out of the way until we had a chance to do something."²⁷³

The following day, Dodson and Hughes met with La Guardia about "the [race] situation in major league baseball." Hughes took the lead and told the mayor that Dodson had met with Rickey and MacPhail, and that *both* had requested that he appoint a special

²⁷⁰ Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson*, 106-107.

²⁷¹ Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson*, 106.

²⁷² Greg Jaklewicz, "Back When Dan Dodson was Baseball's MVP," *Abilene Reporter News*, October 8, 2016, <https://www.reporternews.com/story/news/columnists/greg-jaklewicz/2016/10/08/abilene-texas-greg-jaklewicz-back-when-dan-dodson-was-baseballs-mvp/92374500>.

²⁷³ Frommer, *Rickey and Robinson*, 107; Robinson never got his degree, but at U.C.L.A. he always played on teams with White athletes.

subcommittee of the Mayor's Committee on Unity to study the problem. Moreover, the baseball executives hoped that this group would be made up of themselves, several current members of their committee, and a few high-profile members of the community.²⁷⁴ Dodson later wrote of this meeting with the mayor:

The major purpose I could see for this committee was that it was a stall for time. You could not tell its members this. Yet had Mr. Rickey not delivered—had he been bluffing, as so many contended—I would have been totally discredited and the Mayor's Committee on Unity would have been impaired immeasurably through the loss of public confidence.²⁷⁵

La Guardia knew none of this and seemed to be immediately taken with the idea. It must have seemed like the chance to integrate Major League Baseball before he left office was being dropped in his lap. Dodson then presented the mayor with a preliminary list of names which seems to have been drawn up the previous day in his meeting with Rickey. La Guardia vetoed several candidates who were involved in politics, and then rattled off a handful of possibilities with Bill Robinson at the top of his wish list. Rickey had suggested a group of ten, but the mayor thought seven would be better.²⁷⁶ Deciding who should be asked to be on the committee and how many members it should have would drag on for another thirteen days. All the while, the End Jim Crow in Baseball Campaign was growing stronger and stronger.

²⁷⁴ Meeting Minutes of Mayor La Guardia, Mr. Hughes and Dr. Dodson, July 27, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²⁷⁵ Dodson, "Integration of Negroes in Baseball," 77; we never find out who the "many" were that claimed that Rickey was "bluffing him." This suggests that he was less tight-lipped about Rickey's secret than he otherwise suggests.

²⁷⁶ Meeting Minutes of Mayor La Guardia, July 27, 1945.

Storm Clouds Over the Stadium

On July 30th, the *Daily Worker* ran a story about the new End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee and its growing support among “dozens of trade unions” and prominent citizens such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Paul Robeson.²⁷⁷ Many who had never been to a ballgame were drawn to join the campaign because integrating America’s national pastime had such symbolic importance. This is reflected in a story in the *Daily Worker* that urged its non-sports minded readers to get behind the committee because “baseball...is a vast American institution which influences tens of millions of Americans in their everyday lives.” It explained that the “appearance of Negro players like Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige and Roy Campanella and others in the major leagues would have a tremendous social and political effect on the country.” This article, aimed at readers uninterested in sports, also stated that the Committee’s planned law suits against New York’s baseball teams would “test the validity of the [entire] Ives-Quinn Law” because “if the magnates can circumvent the law on such an obvious and flagrant case of discrimination they certainly can render the whole law impotent in other less important cases.”²⁷⁸ This is just one of many articles about the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee that mention pending law suits against Major League Baseball. Still, I have found no records that the organization ever filed a single case. Even so, with all the

²⁷⁷ “Notables Open Drive on Jimcrow Baseball,” *Daily Worker*, July 30, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/july-30-1945-page-1/docview/1917200615/se-2?accountid=35635>.

²⁷⁸ Phil Gordon, “End Jimcrow Baseball Group Must Receive Wide Support,” *Daily Worker*, July 30, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/july-30-1945-page-2/docview/1917200703/se-2?accountid=35635>; this article in a national publication written primarily by White people, identifying Roy Campanella as one of the top Negro League stars in July 1945, further erodes Rickey’s claim that the Brown Dodgers were simply a “Trojan horse” to get his scouts into Black ballparks.

threats of litigation, the Dodgers, Giants, and Yankees must have felt like a legal Sword of Damocles was hanging over them.

On August 6th, Goldstein struck again with an urgent letter to his burgeoning mailing list that began, “this is an S.O.S.” Supporters are advised that the “final planning meeting for the End Jim Crow in Baseball Day demonstrations will be held on Monday, August 13th, at 8:30 P.M.” Once again, the location was the Manhattan Center. “It is essential,” Goldstein wrote, “all organizations send representatives to this meeting to ensure that uniform procedure is established for everyone participating in the demonstrations.” The phrasing here reminds us that this movement was a grand coalition of movements and that Goldstein recognized the need to keep all the participants on the same page during the protest. This letter, which was the first to be on End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee stationary, concluded with a reminder that the ballpark demonstrations were less than two weeks away.²⁷⁹

The following day, Dodson sent a memo to MacPhail and Rickey clearly meant to move things along. It began with a detailed summary of their correspondence about the makeup of the group and then states that the mayor was now willing to go along with Rickey’s suggestion that it be a ten-man committee, though he still preferred seven. In return, La Guardia wanted to see “another Negro member” and “a well-known Jewish person such as Judge Edward Lazansky of Brooklyn.” Dodson included a tentative list of ten men approved by the mayor and asked for a quick reply because he was “exceptionally anxious that we make an announcement of this committee before August 19th for this is the day designated by the pressure groups” for their demonstrations at

²⁷⁹ Ben Goldstein to Friend, August 6, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds.²⁸⁰ This letter is further evidence that the Mayor's Committee on Baseball was meant to neutralize the End Jim Crow in Baseball Campaign, which was triggered by the passage of Ives-Quinn.

As Dodson waited for the two baseball executives to approve the tentative list of members, the newly formed State Commission Against Discrimination launched its investigation into New York's baseball teams. At its very first meeting, MacPhail had suggested to Dodson that a working group be created that included representatives from New York's three teams and several state commissioners. As he still had not met with Lacy, this probably seemed like a time-tested way to make the whole thing go away. But when Dodson subsequently telephoned the head of the State Commission, Henry C. Turner, with MacPhail's request, he was told that they could not be part of a group with the ball clubs because they may be called upon to investigate them in the future.²⁸¹

The Empire State Strikes Back

The official announcement of the State Commission's investigation into the discriminatory hiring practices of New York's baseball clubs came on August 8th. The probe was triggered by a letter from Councilman Davis to Turner that reminded him that the New York City Council had just passed his resolution "condemning discrimination against Negroes in big league baseball." Turner, as was reported by the *Daily Worker*, responded by designating commissioners "Elmer A. Carter and Julian J. Reiss to hear evidence and make recommendations." Davis called the State Commission's decision to

²⁸⁰ Memorandum from Dodson to Rickey and MacPhail, August 7, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²⁸¹ Dan Dodson to Charles Hughes, July 27, 1945, 2.

investigate baseball “an important gain on the road to victory” and connected this effort to the national struggle for civil rights: “We can and must have New York set the example for all other states in outlawing racial and religious discrimination wherever it exists.” Davis concluded his statement by calling for wide support for “the campaign instigated by the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, the *Daily Worker* and the Negro press.”²⁸²

The first outreach that I have been able to locate from the State Commission to the Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants is a form letter from Reiss dated August 13th that could have been directed to any company in the state. It began, “As you know, the law against discrimination in employment went into effect on July 1, 1945.” The message continues generically, “It is quite possible that the requirements of this law will present what may appear to be troublesome problems for many firms such as yours, and I would like to ask for your confidence in our earnest desire to be of assistance to you whenever problems arise.” There is an enclosed copy of the Ives-Quinn Act and a notice for employees about how the law became effective July 1st which, the letter instructs, is to be posted on the office bulletin board.²⁸³ We have no record of MacPhail’s response, or if the Yankees posted copies of this notice in their offices (or the clubhouse), but we know that several days later he met with Carter because we have the commissioner’s eyebrow raising letter following up that interview.²⁸⁴

²⁸² “State FEPC to Probe Jimcrow In Baseball,” *Daily Worker*, August 9th, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.i.ezproxy.nypl.org/historical-newspapers/august-9-1945-page-4/docview/1917200099/se-2?accountid=35635>.

²⁸³ Julian J. Reiss to Larry MacPhail, August 13, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²⁸⁴ Elmer A. Carter to Larry MacPhail, August 21, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Carter is an interesting figure. His name is listed among the VIPs attending that Elks Day 1940 double-header at Yankee Stadium. At that time, he was serving on the State Unemployment Insurance Board. When Ives-Quinn passed in 1945, Carter was named one of five commissioners for the newly formed State Committee Against Discrimination. Before entering public service, Carter had been the editor of the National Urban League's *Opportunity Magazine*. Though he served under Turner, White sent Carter a copy of Turner's reply to him with a snarky comment that suggested the two already were acquainted with each other.²⁸⁵ We will likely never know if the fact that Carter was a prominent "Negro" caused MacPhail to act as he did, but his follow-up letter suggests the Yankee boss was patronizing.

MacPhail made Carter listen to something he had been writing that sounded an awful lot like his infamous manifesto "The Negro in Baseball," which he would release a month later as a "prebuttal" to the report of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball. Carter's letter thanked MacPhail for being "kind enough to read" the document he was working on and then puts down in writing objections that he states were *already* raised in person. "I do not believe that the attempt to bring Negro leagues into the major league baseball organizations for the purpose of creating a reservoir for the training and schooling of Negro players will solve the problem in any immediate future." Carter explained that "there is a grave danger that [MacPhail's plan] will perpetuate the segregation which now exists. Moreover, he concluded, "it would be a herculean task to bring the Negro

²⁸⁵ Memorandum from Walter White to Elmer Carter, August 27, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>; Carter's name begins appearing on the NAACP letterhead in 1947 as a director.

management to conform to the standards of organized baseball by persuasion. It would be long, arduous, and thankless.”²⁸⁶

Based on Carter’s objections to MacPhail’s plan, it appears that the Yankee owner’s thinking was not radically different from Rickey’s back at that May 1st press conference where he introduced the United States Baseball League. As was discussed, MacPhail had written to the new commissioner three days before Rickey’s announcement about how serious the race problem had become for the three New York teams and that “Rickey and I think we have a possible solution along the lines of cooperation in the establishment and operation of strong Negro Leagues.”²⁸⁷ The big difference between their positions appears to be that MacPhail wanted to partner with the existing Black leagues (his tenants), but Rickey wanted to replace the existing Negro Leagues with a new entity that would eventually become affiliated with Major League Baseball. Each plan seemed to offer an eventual pathway to a limited number of Black players. But this was Deacon’s position in early May, it was now late August, and his meeting with Carter suggests that he had already crossed integration’s Rubicon.

I did not originally find any record of a meeting between Rickey and Carter in August 1945. By accident, I came across a tantalizing letter in the Library of Congress archives that reveals the two had not only met, but that the Deacon brought the state commissioner assigned to the Dodgers into his conspiracy and turned him into an asset. In 1950, Rickey read in a newspaper that Carter was running for Congress and immediately wrote him a letter. It began with Rickey stating that he had just read about Carter’s candidacy and how it reminded him of their meeting almost exactly five years

²⁸⁶ Elmer A. Carter to Larry MacPhail, August 21, 1945.

²⁸⁷ Larry MacPhail to A.B. Chandler, April 27, 1945.

earlier where, “I told you that for many years I had planned to sign a Negro ballplayer and had been scouting Negro players for about two years and had found one of great promise [and] later that summer I signed the player, Jackie Robinson.” Rickey then expressed appreciation for the role Carter played behind the scenes:

You encouraged me greatly on that occasion of your first visit and subsequently you were helpful with counsel and advice. There were some obstacles as you will vividly recall. ...Anyhow the result has been good, and you made a very real contribution, and you deserve the appreciation of everyone who loves baseball and fair play.²⁸⁸

The exact nature of Carter’s “very real contribution” was not made clear. As Carter was with the other commissioners the following month when they confronted Rickey, MacPhail, and Stoneham, he may well have warned him in advance about the “pledge to integrate” and advised him how best to respond.

²⁸⁸ Branch Rickey to Elmer A. Carter, August 15, 1950, Branch Rickey Papers, Box 65, Politics, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Chapter V.

The Mayor vs. the Militants

This chapter focuses on Mayor Fiorello La Guardia's efforts to stop the demonstrations at Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds because he feared they would ignite race riots. It then looks at the forming of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball and the wide range of reactions from the public and the press. The section concludes with the mayor's stratagem to stop the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee protests by enlisting the support of progressives and activists.

Time's Up!

La Guardia seems to have lost patience with the back and forth between his Committee on Unity and the baseball executives. On August 11th, the mayor wrote to Hughes reminding him in no uncertain terms that his position had always been that "if anything is to be done, it should be done before a demonstration," and added that "my present inclination would not be to appoint the Committee if it is forced after a demonstration."²⁸⁹ La Guardia's note, written four days after Dodson had urged MacPhail and Rickey to approve the final list of candidates, apparently set off a whirlwind of activity behind the scenes. Before this day was out, La Guardia told the press that he was forming a special subcommittee of his Mayor's Committee on Unity to address baseball's color line. This announcement was timed with the sending of

²⁸⁹ Fiorello La Guardia to Charles Hughes, August 11, 1945, Box 3383, Folder 11, LaGuardia & Wagner Archives, La Guardia Community College.

invitations to prospective members, before anyone had officially accepted. That may speak to the haste with which things came together that day.²⁹⁰

Instead of a press release, a copy of the letter to MacPhail was distributed to the media. It began, “For some time there has been a great deal of discussion concerning the color line in organized baseball.” This part is inarguable but then La Guardia claims that “a preliminary survey has been made by the Mayor’s Committee on Unity [and] many conferences have been held between the Executive Director of the Committee, baseball officials, and people interested in the game.” Intentionally or unintentionally, the mayor had turned the tedious back and forth between Dodson, Rickey, and MacPhail about the composition of the group into a “preliminary survey.” La Guardia continued, “It seems to me at this point that while everybody is interested, nothing is being done.” Therefore, he continued, at the “request of Chairman Hughes of the Mayor’s Committee on Unity” he was “appointing a Committee to give this one subject a thorough study and make specific recommendations to the Major Leagues.”²⁹¹

The biggest whopper in this letter came where La Guardia gave the impression that his committee somehow enjoyed the support of Major League Baseball. Specifically, he wrote that it was his “understanding that the National League has designated Mr. Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Ball Club and the American League has designated Colonel Larry MacPhail of the New York Ball Club.”²⁹² In fairness to the mayor, some, if not all of his misleading statements could reflect the way he was misled. Indeed, it is

²⁹⁰ “Study of Baseball ‘Color Line’ to be Made by Mayor’s Group,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1945, <https://nyti.ms/35FFlwD>.

²⁹¹ Larry MacPhail to Fiorello La Guardia, August 22, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>

²⁹² Larry MacPhail to Fiorello La Guardia, August 22, 1945.

conceivable that La Guardia imagined that Major League Baseball wanted him to broker a grand deal on integration, just as the Roosevelt administration had wanted him to make Randolph and his March on Washington Committee go away. But, as Dodson wrote, this task force was Rickey's idea and was intended to get the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee to back off so he could sign Robinson without appearing to bow to pressure from subversives. Moreover, Major League Baseball had nothing to do with this task force, but the idea that it did gave it instant credibility—even the *New York Times* ran the story on its front page.²⁹³

MacPhail's tepid acceptance letter corrected La Guardia on this crucial point: "Your letter states that the American League has appointed me to represent the League on a committee to study this problem. This was not entirely accurate." Then he explained how he and Rickey were designated, "at the request of Sam Lacy [to] confer with negro baseball officials and representatives of their press." Without mentioning that this group had never met, he continued that it was outside the scope of the group to "meet with any Civic committee to consider the possible employment of negroes in Organized Baseball." Knowing this, if the mayor still desired, MacPhail wrote that he was willing to "meet with your committee." This is odd phrasing since MacPhail opened by acknowledging the mayor's request that he "serve on the committee." Furthermore, as far as La Guardia knew, he had formed the committee at the urging of *both* MacPhail and Rickey. In any case, this conditional acceptance letter was probably written for the benefit of Major

²⁹³ "Study of Baseball 'Color Line' to be Made," August 12, 1945.

League Baseball as it is dated the same day that MacPhail and the rest of the committee actually had their first meeting with La Guardia at City Hall.²⁹⁴

Dodson Spills the Beans

Shortly after news of the mayor's new baseball integration task force broke on August 11th, Dodson was contacted by the *New York Herald Tribune* for comment. According to the article that ran the following day, he had told its reporter that the "formation of the committee...was prompted by the passage of the Ives-Quinn state anti-discrimination law in March." Its article also had Dodson stating that the Mayor's Committee on Unity anticipated that the new law "might bring a showdown on the question of Negroes in major league baseball this year and perhaps picketing at the ballparks."²⁹⁵ After seeing his words in print, Dodson wrote a two-page letter to the editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, which copied MacPhail and Rickey. In his response, he suggested that his comments were meant only for "background" and had been mischaracterized in some areas. There were no explicit denials, and he concludes by explaining that this letter was meant to soothe the baseball executives:

I judge there is no reason for publishing a correction of this statement but for the record and for the clarification of the Committee when it convenes, I wish to make the position of the Mayor's Committee clear both to yourselves and to Colonel MacPhail and Mr. Rickey.²⁹⁶

Whatever Dodson's exact choice of words were to the reporter, he did suggest that Ives-Quinn was the cause of the current uprising against New York's baseball teams and at no

²⁹⁴ Larry MacPhail to Fiorello La Guardia, August 22, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

²⁹⁵ "Mayor Initiates Study," August 12, 1945.

²⁹⁶ Dan Dodson to Editor, *New York Herald Tribune*, August 13, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

point claims that he was misquoted.²⁹⁷ Moreover, these remarks were entirely consistent with what he later wrote about how the Committee on Unity anticipated that passage of the law would lead to protests against baseball during the 1945 season.²⁹⁸

Reactions From the Press

On August 12th, the story “Study of Baseball ‘Color Line’ to be Made by Mayor’s Group” appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*. It was unusual for the Gray Lady to report on baseball’s color line, so a cover story is especially noteworthy—even the news of Robinson’s signing the following October would be buried on page seventeen. The *Times* piece basically repurposed the mayor’s letter as a news story without questioning any of the claims or assertions therein.²⁹⁹ Once again, it was the *Daily Worker* that provided depth and analysis. Their story presented the basic facts from the mayor’s letter but then added critical context. First it pointed out that this new committee “does not include any people actually associated with the eight-year-old fight to abolish Jimcrow in America’s pastime.” It also complained how “it boasts two major league club-owners, Rickey and MacPhail, who have consistently opposed the hiring of Negro players.” Rather, the article opines, it is Goldstein’s committee “and not the mayor’s which plans concrete steps to end Jimcrow in baseball this year.” Furthermore, it argued that there was no need for the mayor to study the problem now, “when the Ives-Quinn bill makes it unlawful for men like MacPhail and Rickey to

²⁹⁷ “Mayor Initiates Study,” August 12, 1945; Rickey was the only other member of the committee contacted for the story, but unlike Dodson, he did a masterful job of saying nothing: “I think it is probably a very interesting thing the Mayor is doing.”

²⁹⁸ Dodson, “The Committee on Unity,” 293.

²⁹⁹ “Study of Baseball ‘Color Line’ to be Made,” August 12, 1945.

continue their Jimcrow hiring practices.” Instead, it called for “further mass pressure against the reactionary club-owners...and a militant fight to endorse the Ives-Quinn bill in regards to New York ball teams.”³⁰⁰ It bears repeating that this story about La Guardia’s baseball task force, like so many other articles about desegregating New York’s teams from this period, features some kind of reference to Ives-Quinn.³⁰¹

The Black press greeted the mayor’s action with mixed reactions. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, which had long campaigned against Jim Crow in Major League Baseball and sponsored the tryouts in Boston four months earlier, hailed the move. Their article told readers to “expect [a] showdown in the near future” and claimed that La Guardia’s move followed “months of ‘behind closed doors’ conferences and picketing of ballparks.” Overall, excerpts from the mayor’s letter were used to create a sense of urgency in the *Courier* story that did not come across in the unabridged version. Also striking was how the story did not just link La Guardia’s move to Ives-Quinn but to the successful effort to pass Ives-Quinn. It stated that this new committee was to be headed by Hughes who, as Chairman of the Mayor’s Committee on Unity, “played a leading role in the passage of the state Ives-Quinn anti-bias bill which became law July 1.”³⁰² Actually, Rector John H. Johnson from Harlem would be chosen to chair the Mayor’s Committee on Baseball. He had been a leading figure in the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” campaign in the

³⁰⁰ Bill Mardo, “Committee to Study Jimcrow in Baseball,” *Daily Worker*, August 13, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/august-13-1945-page-2/docview/1917200877/se-2?accountid=35635>.

³⁰¹ As far as the mayor himself, it is interesting that while the *Daily Worker* attacked what it called his “study group,” it did not go after him personally. Rather, it suggested that he might have been “misled” into taking this action. Which, as we know, was essentially the case.

³⁰² James Edmond Boyack, “Plans for Showdown with Major Ball Clubs,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 18, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/plans-showdown-with-major-ball-clubs/docview/202154324/se-2?accountid=11311>.

1930s.³⁰³ Still, the fact that one of the most respected Black publications in the country was drawing connections to the successful effort to pass Ives-Quinn indicated that they saw La Guardia making a sincere effort to integrate America's most popular sport. The *Courier* story concluded with Dodson's remarks from several days earlier that "the formation of the [new] committee was prompted by the passage of the Ives-Quinn bill [and that] we thought it might bring a showdown on the question of Negroes in major league baseball this year."³⁰⁴

Not all Black newspapers were enthusiastic about the mayor's actions. The *New York Amsterdam News* excoriated La Guardia and called his committee a cynical attempt to "steal a march on the New York State F.E.P.C.," which was created by the governor who, it points out, was his political rival. Indeed, this story insisted that La Guardia only jumped into action when he got wind that state commissioners were going to investigate the Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants for violating Ives-Quinn because he wanted some of the credit when the teams were forced to integrate.³⁰⁵ We have already presented correspondence and memoranda that establish the basic chain of events that led La Guardia to form this committee, but personal enmity could still have also played a role. There was no love lost between the mayor and the governor. La Guardia had refused to endorse Dewey in his run against FDR in 1944, and then the governor basically blocked La Guardia's path to re-election the following April by refusing to support his

³⁰³ Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode? Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford press, 1991), 120.

³⁰⁴ Boyack, "Plans for Showdown with Major Ball Clubs," August 18, 1945.

³⁰⁵ Joe Blow, LaGuardia Seen Beclouding Ball Race Ban Issue," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 18, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/la-guardia-seen-beclouding-ball-race-ban-issue/docview/226032959/se-2?accountid=11311>.

campaign's request that the mayor run on the Republican Party ticket, as he had done in the past.³⁰⁶

Still, the *New York Amsterdam News* article gave Dewey far too much credit for championing the state's anti-discrimination bill and also made the spurious claim that the mayor always had it in his power to invoke the existing civil rights laws in New York State to compel the Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants to sign Black ballplayers. As was discussed, after studying state law and hiring practices, Dewey's bipartisan committee had concluded in the winter that it was necessary to pass a ban on workplace discrimination.

Several days later, columnist Dan Burley's piece in the *New York Amsterdam News* accused La Guardia of "taking advantage of the political situation in New York City to gain votes for his candidate for mayor, Newbold Morris" through his baseball committee. He went so far as to claim that "the attempt of LaGuardia to set up a commission to make a 'study' of the situation smacks of a brand of sabotage that should not be found in such a pressing matter." Instead, Burley pushed for a legal solution:

With the State F.E.P.C. in operation with its penalties, fines and due processes of law already established, the method of pressure against the reactionaries in organized baseball is apparent. [Major League Baseball] should be sued, prosecuted, and hounded until something is done. There is no other way around it. All this conciliatory nonsense is only so much delay.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ James A. Hagerty, "Chances of La Guardia for Fourth Term Wane," *New York Times*, April 29, 1945, <https://nyti.ms/34xj5Vg>.

³⁰⁷ Dan Burley, "LaGuardia Move Seen as Definitely Political," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 25, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/dan-burles-confidentially-yours/docview/226039579/se-2?accountid=11311>.

While some of the accusations in the *New York Amsterdam News* stories were off the mark, they give us a strong sense of the political state of play in New York State on the eve of the integration.

Reactions From the Public

La Guardia's action prompted an outpouring of mail to City Hall. One constituent from Harlem, addressing him as "Dear Honorable Mayor," wrote how he was "glad to see you starting to help fight discrimination in organized baseball."³⁰⁸ But a writer from Brooklyn, who supported the forming of the committee, was incredulous that it "has two members who are directly, morally, and legally responsible for the shocking condition [it] is supposedly trying to eliminate." The author declared that "Larry MacPhail and Branch Rickey are, to my mind, even more dangerous than Bilbo and Rankin, since they pretend to be against discrimination, but they go on practicing it." The letter went on to accuse the two baseball executives of "openly and flagrantly violating the new state law against discrimination, yet you appoint them to a commission to study the problem." The note concluded sarcastically, "you might just as well put two murderers on a commission to study the problem of murder."³⁰⁹

One constituent from Manhattan approved the mayor's move but not the inclusion of the noted tap dancer Bill Robinson who, it suggested, should have been replaced with a Black activist like Davis.³¹⁰ This opinion was also reflected in other letters and echoed

³⁰⁸ Pettiford to Fiorello La Guardia, August 13, 1945, Departmental Correspondence, Box 3353, Folder 6, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

³⁰⁹ Hirsh to Fiorello La Guardia, August 15, 1945, Departmental Correspondence, Box 3353, Folder 6, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

³¹⁰ Strohmer to Fiorello La Guardia, August 12, 1945, Departmental Correspondence, Box 3353, Folder 6, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

editorials appearing in the *Daily Worker* and Black publications. Many claimed that he had little connection to baseball or the Black community. While I agree that Davis should have been included, the committee was led by an activist minister from Harlem. Moreover, I think La Guardia's instincts picking Bill Robinson were pretty good. He was so popular in Harlem that his nickname was "the Mayor of Harlem."³¹¹ And, as far as baseball and activism, he performed for free at the very first Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters fundraiser at Yankee Stadium.³¹² As a fan, he was a fixture at Yankee games when his good friend Babe Ruth was on the team, and even traveled with the club to the 1932 World Series. He was also the first person of color to enter the New York Yankees locker room as a guest and was known to sit in their dugout during batting practice. As a businessman, he was the owner of the New York Black Yankees, which rented Yankee Stadium. Finally, he was a pallbearer at Babe Ruth's funeral in 1948.³¹³ So, if La Guardia was looking for a person of color who was popular in the Black community and understood the business of baseball in New York City, he found one.

The most important response to the mayor's announcement came from Ben Goldstein on behalf of the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee. He informed the mayor that "we are extremely pleased to read of the formation of a committee to investigate the hiring practices of the major baseball leagues. We should like to congratulate you heartily for your desire to do something about this condition." But then he cautioned La Guardia, "We hope that this will not be a committee which will merely 'investigate'" and

³¹¹ Cecilia Wren, "'The Mayor of Harlem' Celebrates Bill Robinson as Dance Superstar, as Well as Social Activist," *Washington Post*, May 21, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/theater_dance/bill-bojangles-robinson-mayor-of-harlem-documentary/2021/05/19/7e81c35c-b4d9-11eb-a980-a60af976ed44_story.html

³¹² Overmyer, "Black Baseball at Yankees Stadium."

³¹³ Jenkinson, "Babe Ruth and the Issue of Race."

reminded him that “during the past eight years, many investigations have been held, yet [despite] the existence of Negro ball players whose qualifications and abilities are unquestioned, not a single Negro ball player plays or has ever played in the major leagues.” Goldstein then asserted that his movement has received a “wide and enthusiastic response from the people of the city,” which left no doubt in his mind that “New Yorkers want to see an end to the discrimination against Negroes in our great national pastime.” Therefore, he informed the mayor that the demonstrations would take place as scheduled on August 18th at the Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field.³¹⁴ Goldstein’s first two letters to La Guardia went unanswered, this one would not.

The End Jim Crow in Baseball Day

On Monday, August 13th, Goldstein told the *Daily Worker* that the Mayor’s move “represented a partial victory [and that] a successful demonstration Saturday will be a further step...toward the real thing—Negroes on big league teams.” The story also reported that many labor groups were “mobilizing their entire memberships for the Saturday actions.”³¹⁵ These included the National Maritime Union, which was providing the biggest speaker for the rally, Captain Hugh Mulzac.³¹⁶ Now largely forgotten, Mulzac was the closest thing America had to Jackie Robinson before Jackie Robinson. Mulzac was selected to become the first ever Black captain in the U.S. Navy but refused the

³¹⁴ Ben Goldstein to Fiorello La Guardia, August 13, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal. <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³¹⁵ “Call to Demonstrate Against Baseball Jim Crow Wins Wide Aid,” *Daily Worker*, August 14, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/august-14-1945-page-5/docview/1917203538/se-2?accountid=35635>.

³¹⁶ “Captain Mulzac and Crew to Join Rallies Against Baseball Jimcrow,” *Daily Worker*, August 15, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/august-15-1945-page-11/docview/1917200701/se-2?accountid=35635>.

historic honor when he learned he was to skipper a Jim Crow (all Black crew) ship. The Navy brass finally relented, and he became the first African American to command an integrated ship, the U.S.S. Booker T. Washington.³¹⁷ This was national news, and none other than opera-star and activist Marian Anderson christened the vessel. And not only would Mulzac be marching and speaking out against Jim Crow in baseball on August 18th, but so would his mixed-race crew—one of whom told the *Daily Worker*, “Negro and white seaman and officers have worked together during the toughest moments. Certainly, then, Negro and white athletes can play together.”³¹⁸

A news report on August 14th claimed that the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, and the labor organizations supporting it, had covered New York City with half-a-million leaflets providing operational details about the demonstrations. The headline for these flyers screamed “JIM CROW IN BASEBALL MUST GO!” Just below were pictures of baseball legends Dizzy Dean and Lou Gehrig with quotes from them denouncing baseball’s race ban. The body copy below reflected how World War II had changed the conversation about segregation in America: “The disgraceful discrimination against Negro players in baseball exists despite the shortage of topflight players. Negro and white troops fought for the Four Freedoms overseas. Yet Negro athletes are prevented from enjoying those freedoms in America’s National Pastime.” The flyer also mentions the anti-discrimination law that set all of this into motion, “The recently passed Ives-Quinn Law makes discrimination unlawful. The baseball magnates must be made to

³¹⁷ Frederick N. Rasmussen, “Baltimore Mariner Hugh Mulzac Became First Black Man to Command a U.S. Merchant Vessel,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 19, 2018, accessed August 16, 2021, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/features/retro-baltimore/bs-md-retro-baltimore23-story.html>.

³¹⁸ “Captain Mulzac and Crew,” August 15, 1945.

abide by the law of our State.”³¹⁹ This leaflet blanketed New York City less than two weeks before Rickey brought Robinson to Brooklyn.

There was little reporting on the final planning meeting on August 13th at the Manhattan Center. We do know it was not led by Goldstein but by a lawyer named Harold Fortenzer. Perhaps the focus of the session was having a legal professional instruct protestors on how to be arrested nonviolently by the police? Afterall, Mahatma Gandhi (another one of Rickey’s nicknames was “the Mahatma”) was already an international hero inspiring nonviolent activism, and CORE was already using his tactics to integrate businesses and restaurants in Chicago.³²⁰ What we do know is that at some point a special presentation was made by Leon Quat, executive secretary of the Metropolitan Interfaith organization, outlining their plans for *after* the protests. He explained that “since, Ives-Quinn went into effect on July 1st [...] it would be necessary to prove discrimination since that time.” Therefore, they intended to “form a pool of qualified Negro baseball players [who] would be sent in groups of four or more to various Major League clubs where they would demand the same opportunities as white candidates.” When there was a “clear case of discrimination, the committee would pursue appropriate action under New York’s anti-discriminatory laws.”³²¹ As we know today, this scheme that Quat discussed would never materialize because the creation of the Mayor’s Committee on Baseball robbed the movement of a great deal of momentum, and then Robinson’s signing made it irrelevant. But only a few days before the protests

³¹⁹ “Call to Demonstrate,” August 14, 1945.

³²⁰ Paul R. Dekar, “Gandhi’s Influence on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States,” FOR, <https://forusa.org/gandhis-influence-on-the-civil-rights-movement-in-the-united-states>.

³²¹ “Triple Attack Launched Against Jim Crow Baseball,” *New York Age*, August 18, 1945, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/40853434>.

nobody, except for Branch Rickey, could have imagined how quickly the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee would be swept into the dustbin of history.

As if New York's baseball executives did not already have enough to worry about, the day before the protest was scheduled, the NAACP weighed into the fight. White wrote to Chairman Turner to see where the State Commission's investigation of New York's ball clubs stood. His letter stated that his query was prompted by "the appointment by Mayor LaGuardia of a committee to study and make recommendations" on the integration of the Major Leagues. White also informed Turner that he had received many inquiries from the twenty-eight NAACP branches in New York State about his investigation and planned to pass along Turner's responses to 520,000 NAACP members through its bulletin.³²² The terse response simply repeated the same information available in the newspapers that he had appointed Carter and Reiss to investigate the matter.³²³ Besides pressuring the state to have New York's baseball clubs comply with the law, the NAACP launched a public awareness campaign at this time to educate minority groups about their rights under the new Ives-Quinn law.³²⁴

³²² Walter White to Henry Turner, August 17, 1945, from Library of Congress, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

³²³ Henry Turner to Walter White, August 22, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>; perhaps there was a long-standing personal relationship between White and Carter, because the head of the NAACP turns around and sends a copy of Turner's response to Carter, the only Black commissioner, with a snarky comment about his "very cautious reply." Memorandum from Walter White to Elmer Carter, August 27, 1945, ProQuest, NAACP Files, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99153836085503941/catalog>.

³²⁴ "Initiates Program to Educate Minorities Under Anti-Bias Law," *New York Age*, August 22, 1945, Newspapers.com, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/40853608/>.

La Guardia Calls in His Chips

Dodson later wrote that La Guardia's creation of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball "made it possible for me to go to the End Jim Crow group and ask that they call off their...demonstration they had planned both at Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds."³²⁵ Actually, it was La Guardia himself who personally led the efforts to shut down the protests. On August 14th, he finally responded directly to Goldstein. His letter began cordially, "I am glad to hear that the formation of a Committee to concern itself with racial discrimination in organized baseball meets with your approval." But the tone quickly turned defensive. "It is not my understanding and I know it is not the understanding of the representatives of the two Major Leagues who have accepted membership on the Committee to 'just investigate' as you say." Then he got down to business: "I regret to note your plans for a demonstration at the Polo Grounds and Ebbets Field on Saturday, August 18th." La Guardia then cautioned that "if it provokes disorder, it will retard the solution of the real problem and discourage earnest, sincere people who want to reason this out and settle the question." After making the case that the protests could be counter-productive and antagonize baseball fans, the mayor wrote, "Personally, I believe it would be far more helpful that no demonstrations be had at this time. I request that plans for a demonstration be called off. I can do no more than that." La Guardia concluded with a warning, "If all we have done to date is to be destroyed, the responsibility will be on those who may be responsible for any untoward incident."³²⁶ This message was intended for a much bigger audience than Ben Goldstein.

³²⁵ Dodson, "Integration of Negroes in Baseball," 77.

³²⁶ Fiorello La Guardia to Ben Goldstein, August 14, 1945, Departmental Correspondence, Box 3353, Folder 6, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

The End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee's stationary featured a long list of prominent organizations and individuals who endorsed its campaign. Their mailings also included an additional page listing their most celebrated supporters. La Guardia's masterstroke was to send copies of his response to Goldstein directly to his backers. The mayor's cover letter to them began by explaining that he was sending them a copy of the letter he sent to Goldstein and that he hoped that they "agree with the views stated in my letter and...will help in calling off the proposed demonstration." La Guardia added that he feared these protests might make desegregation more difficult and pleaded, "Let us not make it harder for the young men when they get their chance or even retard their opportunity." As far as his baseball committee, he warned that "it would be most difficult to get the gentlemen, whom I have appointed, to serve if anything unpleasant should happen during their deliberation."³²⁷ Among Goldstein's sponsors who presumably received this appeal were old political allies of La Guardia, such as Congressman Marcantonio and the NAACP. While he had been a lame duck since April, he was still the most powerful political figure in the city and was able to call in a lot of favors.³²⁸

Dodson also sent his own reply to Goldstein's letter to La Guardia, undoubtedly at the direction of the mayor. It began: "A few months back, numerous requests came from those aligned with your movement to the Mayor's Committee [on Unity] urging us to do something about discrimination in major league baseball, this we set out to do." Then he told Goldstein at length about how he met with Rickey and MacPhail, who had already been "designated by their respective leagues to represent the leagues in trying to work out

³²⁷ Fiorello La Guardia to Sponsors of the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, August 14, 1945, Departmental Correspondence, Box 3353, Folder 6, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

³²⁸ Hagerty, "Chances of La Guardia for Fourth Term Wane," April 29, 1945.

the whole problem.” First, they asked him to get the State Commission to form a committee with them, but they refused to work with MacPhail and Rickey. So, the baseball executives asked the mayor, through Dodson, to form this committee because they wanted “the whole problem...solved as soon as possible.”³²⁹

Then, after laying out an idealized version of how the Mayor’s Committee on Baseball came into being, Dodson warned Goldstein that his protests “might lead any of the persons invited to serve on the committee to decline” for fear that “their findings” might be viewed as giving in to “pressure group demands.” Furthermore, if there was violence, it might “set back the cause of race relations [for] a long time.” Dodson went further arguing that the planned demonstrations could make it more difficult for Black players to be accepted in the Majors because of “doubts in the minds of many as to whether they were chosen because of ability or because of public pressure which had led to the prostitution of our major national sport due to race agitation.” Finally, he offered Goldstein advice: if the mayor’s baseball committee failed there would still be “plenty of time to court the pressure and mobilize public opinion for a showdown fight.” Were this the case, it would be wiser for him to stay clear of the mayor’s efforts “so that no part of the failure could be charged to you.”³³⁰

Besides buying time for Rickey, Dodson had his own reasons for wanting Goldstein to be on the sidelines when baseball’s color line was broken. He later wrote, “It would have been disastrous to the outcome of the enterprise—in my judgement—had the appearance been given that a Negro was employed in Organized Baseball either because

³²⁹ Dan Dodson to Ben Goldstein August 14, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³³⁰ Dan Dodson to Ben Goldstein August 14, 1945.

of the new law or because of a pressure group program.” But then he acknowledged, “Undoubtedly, however, both contributed to the initiation of the venture, and the venture was less difficult, no doubt, because both were realities.”³³¹ Dodson’s view, that it would set a dangerous precedent if activism and the democratic process were credited for integrating Major League Baseball, was only slightly less extreme than Rickey’s. Baseball’s great emancipator was a God-fearing conservative who had no intention of letting leftists take credit for his civil rights achievement, especially Goldstein’s group which he believed, with some justification, was “communist inspired.”³³²

We have no record of the pressure supporters and sponsors put on Goldstein and the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee to call off their protest, but a few letters saved by the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame give us a hint. One is a letter from the American Labor Party, which was chaired by Marcantonio, the mayor’s longtime ally. The party’s secretary told the mayor, “We agree with your views on the subject and, of course, believe that the calling off of the demonstration will enable you to use your good offices effectively in correcting this obvious injustice.”³³³ The day before the protests, Goldstein gave in to the intense institutional pressure and wrote the mayor to inform him that they were canceling the parade and the protests. Though he had no cards left to play, he did request on behalf of his group that he, Councilman Davis, and a labor leader be added to the Mayor’s Committee on Baseball.³³⁴

³³¹ Dodson, “Integration of Negroes in Baseball,” 78.

³³² Dodson, “Integration of Negroes in Baseball,” 76.

³³³ Eugene P. Connelly to Fiorello H. La Guardia, August 22, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³³⁴ Ben Goldstein to Fiorello La Guardia, August 17, 1945, Departmental Correspondence, Box 3353, Folder 6, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Papers, Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York City, New York.

The *Daily Worker* ran a story on Saturday, August 18th, that a single End Jim Crow in Baseball rally was still planned for noon in Harlem with Mulzac and a host of prominent speakers.³³⁵ However, the only reporting after the event was a tight photo in Monday's *Daily Worker* of demonstrators, and the caption made no mention of the crowd size or who spoke.³³⁶ Given that there was no story on the gathering, we must conclude that either communist reporters did not work weekends, or the mayor's appeal reduced turnout to the point that the paper that had worked so hard to promote the rally, wanted to pretend it did not take place.

³³⁵ "Anti-Jimcrow Rally in Harlem at Noon, Ball Park Demonstrations Postponed," *Daily Worker*, August 18, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/august-18-1945-page-1/docview/1917199425/se-2?accountid=35635>.

³³⁶ "At Rally to End Jimcrow in Baseball," *Daily Worker*, August 20, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/august-20-1945-page-2/docview/1917200663/se-2?accountid=35635>.

Chapter VI.

Baseball on the Ballot

This chapter begins with a discussion of the first meeting of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball. Then it looks at how Rickey brought Robinson to Brooklyn shortly afterward, and through articles from the Black press, demonstrates how their secret meeting was actually not that secret. From there, it frames the struggle to force New York City's ballclubs to adhere to Ives-Quinn as a campaign issue in the upcoming elections. Finally, this section explores MacPhail's efforts to sabotage La Guardia's committee, the events surrounding Robinson's signing, and concludes with a closing argument.

The Mayor's Committee on Baseball Assembles

Exactly one week after the Emperor of Japan announced his nation's unconditional surrender, Fiorello La Guardia oversaw the first meeting of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball at City Hall. The group that met on August 22nd was missing Bill Robinson and Professor Robert Haig of Columbia, both of whom had not yet replied to the mayor's invitation. Thanks to Dodson's minutes, we have a detailed picture of this meeting. La Guardia got things going by expressing his "thanks to those [present] who had accepted for undertaking this job and said he was under no illusions about the difficulty of preparing a sane, helpful report." After the mayor's opening remarks, the eight members adjourned to another room where they elected Reverend Johnson, a religious and civic leader from Harlem (and the only Black member present) chairman while Dodson was chosen secretary-treasurer. Once procedural matters were settled,

according to the minutes, “considerable discussion ensued which dealt largely with the scope of the problem and what might be accomplished by such a committee.”³³⁷ Given that MacPhail would not attend another meeting and released his own report before the others could get theirs out, the “discussion” might have gotten contentious. Mann wrote that MacPhail favored “helping Negro baseball by the simple process of letting it alone.”³³⁸ The only thing that everyone seemed to agree upon, according to the minutes, was that each member should write up a list of questions or problems that they think the committee should consider that would turn into a memorandum outlining next steps by Johnson and Dodson.³³⁹

Johnson’s response to the first meeting is interesting. Several days later, he sent Dodson a memo that began, since “the only action which this Committee can take is to render a report, it should be done quickly, publicly [and] no extended survey is required.” He then brought up the points that he thought that their report should make, such as “There is no doubt about the ability of Negro athletes to develop into players of Major League caliber quickly...if the barriers against them are eliminated.” Johnson also called for “steps to be taken at once, to integrate qualified Negro ball players into Organized Baseball,” and pointed out that “there are already sections of the country where this can take place without causing friction.” In what was probably a nod to MacPhail’s position, he acknowledged that there were “large financial investments” involved and suggested that “constructive action can be taken to accompany the goal of integration without jeopardizing the investments in either Major League Baseball, or in the Negro

³³⁷ Dan Dodson, Organizational Meeting of Mayor’s Committee on Discrimination in Baseball, August 22, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³³⁸ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 116.

³³⁹ Dodson, Organizational Meeting of Mayor’s Committee, August 22, 1945.

Leagues.”³⁴⁰ Essentially, in this memo written just a couple days after the first meeting, Johnson has practically put together a viable report that considered all sides. But given that the whole reason for the group was to buy time for Rickey, it is hardly surprising that Dodson would not release the final report until after baseball’s color line was broken.

As for Dodson, he was a bureaucratic blur after the first meeting: he reached out to the *New York Times* requesting they search their morgue for biographies of Black athletes who have competed against Whites in football, track, and boxing over the previous twenty five years. He interviewed numerous officials from baseball, including Ford Frick. He obtained reports and studies for Rickey to help him prepare for his “great experiment.” These included things such as the defense department’s pamphlet “How Management Can Integrate Negroes in War Industries.” Dodson even pulled Lacy into helping out with the Mayor’s Committee on Baseball report. Ironically, he prefaces his request saying that he was reaching out to Lacy for help because MacPhail had “referred on numerous occasions to conferences” they had, and that the Yankee boss boasted he was “as well informed about Negro baseball as any of the sportswriters on any of the Negro papers.”³⁴¹ MacPhail’s praise for Lacy, who he was still ducking, was probably meant to burnish his own credibility on Black baseball.³⁴² Dodson’s letter to Lacy included several pages of questions about the Negro Leagues, and he responded quickly with lengthy, detailed answers.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Memorandum from John Johnson to Dan Dodson, August 31, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁴¹ Dan Dodson to Sam Lacy, August 24, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁴² Sam Lacy to Larry MacPhail, June 1, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁴³ Sam Lacy to Dan Dodson, August 27, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>; Rickey had to break the awkward news to Lacy that MacPhail had told him he was “opposed to meeting with a committee he did not know.”

Rickey's Response

We have no idea how Rickey saw the first meeting of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball that took place on August 22nd. However, just a couple days later, his head scout, Clyde Sukeforth, was sent to Chicago to bring Jackie Robinson back to the Dodger offices in Brooklyn. Mann would later write of the first meeting of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball how Rickey sat there with the "outstanding Negro player already in his hip pocket as an historic surprise for the public and his unsuspecting associates." That was not the case at all and appears to be another instance of Mann (probably at the behest of Rickey) switching the order of events to push the narrative that his boss was going to sign Robinson regardless of what the activists or politicians did.³⁴⁴ To be clear, Robinson did not meet the Dodger general manager in Brooklyn until August 28th. It is possible that Rickey left the meeting with the mayor six days earlier thinking the whole thing was becoming a hot mess and he needed to bring Robinson in. As far as timing, Lowenfish wrote that he had just been waiting for the war to end.³⁴⁵ But the Japanese surrender took place almost two weeks before he brought Robinson east. Either way, Robinson was certainly not "already in [Rickey's] hip pocket" when the Mayor's Committee on Baseball convened for the first time. In fact, Robinson told *Jet Magazine* that he had no idea the Dodgers even knew who he was until he was approached by

³⁴⁴ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 115.

³⁴⁵ Personally, I suspect Rickey might have been waiting for his purchase of a controlling interest in the Dodgers, with partners Walter O'Malley and John Smith, to become official. The sale was completed on August 13, 1945. Afterwards, he no longer had to answer to an ownership board. Two weeks later, his first move as a majority owner was to make a secret deal with Robinson; Craig Muder, "Branch Rickey Takes Control of Dodgers," National Baseball Hall of Fame, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://baseballhall.org/discover/inside-pitch/rickey-takes-control-of-dodgers>.

Sukeforth in Chicago two days before the historic secret meeting in Brooklyn on August 28th.³⁴⁶

A fascinating story about Robinson appeared in the *Chicago Defender* on September 1st. Several days earlier (the *Defender* was weekly), Robinson was cornered by its sports columnist Fay Young between games of a double-header between the Kansas City Monarchs and the Chicago American Giants. Young had just heard a rumor that Robinson was about to leave the team, which was true. The reason he was leaving, according to the rumor, was either he had been called to testify before La Guardia's committee in New York, or he was traveling to Brooklyn to sign with Rickey's Brown Dodgers, which the columnist saw as a "Jim Crow team" formed to skirt Ives-Quinn. Jackie shot back, "just rumors." The *Defender* reporter countered that many have heard the rumors, including the Monarch's owners. Robinson grinned, "If you don't see me here tomorrow, then there's something to it."³⁴⁷ As everyone knows, Young did not see him the next day.³⁴⁸

The secret meeting that took place in the Dodger offices on August 28th, between the two great men who integrated baseball was far less secret than we have been led to believe. A couple days later, Rickey confirmed to the *Pittsburgh Courier* that the rumors going around that he had met with Robinson were true, but then he categorically denied he was considering signing him for the Brooklyn Dodgers. His exact words were, "I am interested in investing in a Negro team and would like to use Jackie Robinson on that

³⁴⁶ Robinson, "Jackie Tells How He Laughed at Scout," 21.

³⁴⁷ Young, "We Won't Stand for Any Bunk," September 1, 1945; though they are remembered as a smokescreen, the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers were a real team managed by Hall of Famer Oscar Charleston.

³⁴⁸ Monarch's owner Tom Baird fumed after Robinson's sign was announced in October that he should be compensated because Jackie's leaving the team during the final week of the season to meet with Rickey cost his club the pennant; William Tucker, "Robinson's Signing Stirs Hornet's Nest," *Honolulu Advertiser*, October 25, 1945, Newspapers.com, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/259768712>.

team.”³⁴⁹ This was a lie, but it bears repeating that the man who insisted Ives-Quinn played no role in the integration of baseball had no problem lying when it suited his purpose.

Several weeks later, as a showdown between the State Commission and the three team executives loomed, Dan Burley wrote in his column that Rickey “recently called [Jackie Robinson] to New York for a secret meeting, where it is believed, Branch told the former University of California all-round athlete, to hold himself in readiness to make a sudden jump if the pressure [from the state investigation] got too hot on Brother Rickey.”³⁵⁰ This might well have been the case. After all, when Robinson left Rickey’s office a month earlier, he only had an agreement that he would be offered a contract by November 1st.³⁵¹

Several days later, Bill Mardo of the *Daily Worker* shared Burley’s reporting about Rickey secretly bringing in Robinson and keeping him on hold in case things went badly in his upcoming meetings with the state commissioners. But he added his own two cents, “you can be certain that the Dodger prexy won’t sign Jackie Robinson or any other Negro star until he’s given absolutely no other alternative...”³⁵² Keep in mind, this cynicism was coming from a reporter who spent a lot of time in Rickey’s office.

³⁴⁹ “Rickey Admits Calling in Jackie Robinson,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 1, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/rickey-admits-calling-jackie-robinson/docview/202139468/se-2?accountid=11311>.

³⁵⁰ Dan Burley, “Larry MacPhail and Big League Color Bar,” *New York Amsterdam News*, Sep 29, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/dan-burleys-confidentially-yours/docview/226128525/se-2?accountid=11311>.

³⁵¹ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 67.

³⁵² Bill Mardo, “In this Corner,” *Daily Worker*, October 2, 1945, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/october-2-1945-page-10/docview/1917200531/se-2?accountid=11311>.

The Election Heats Up

In the fall of 1945, New York City experienced a historic election cycle; Fiorello La Guardia, who had been a fixture in city, state, and national politics since 1916, was a lame duck.³⁵³ A look back at the final night of La Guardia's final campaign for mayor in 1941 underscores how important Harlem was in the New York City electoral map and possibly helps explain why he wanted to integrate baseball before he left office.

According to the *New York Times* account, an adoring crowd of over 20,000 residents attended a late evening rally for "Butch" hosted by Cab Calloway at Colonial Park on 148th Street—many who could not jam into the park were hanging out of windows and lining fire escapes. The paper called this rally the most enthusiastic of the entire campaign. The festivities began with Calloway leading his orchestra in a musical salute to the mayor, after which he introduced La Guardia as "the best mayor the city ever had." When the cheering finally abated, the mayor declared that "this is not a political meeting; it is just a party among friends." After his speech, he pulled his friend, Bill Robinson, up to the microphone and shouted, "The Mayor of New York now welcomes the Mayor of Harlem, Bill Robinson." La Guardia then left the park, but he was not done with Harlem; for twenty-one years he had ended campaigns with an appearance at his "lucky corner" of 116th Street and Lexington Avenue. Waiting there for him that night were 5,000 more well-wishers and his old friend and political ally Vito Marcantonio. The congressman was also the leader of the American Labor Party, whose vote provided the margin of victory for La Guardia in this final election.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ "La Guardia, Fiorello," Our Campaigns, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetail.html?CandidateID=26839>.

³⁵⁴ "Huge Rallies End La Guardia Race" *New York Times*, November 4, 1941, 1; "Mayor Winds Up at 'Lucky Corner'," *New York Times*, November 4, 1941, <https://nyti.ms/3HzBfUY>.

According to Mann, with state and city elections looming, “the Negro and baseball was a popular vehicle with all political parties.”³⁵⁵ Much has been written about how Councilman Davis used a widely distributed pamphlet during his re-election campaign that featured a cover photo of a dead Black G.I. next to one of a Negro League pitcher winding up. The caption for these gruesome images was “good enough to DIE... but not good enough to PITCH.” This brochure also touts the candidate’s work with the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, Eleanor Roosevelt, and William O’Dwyer, to integrate our national pastime.³⁵⁶ As was discussed, Davis had been a thorn in the side of New York’s segregated ball clubs and businesses even before Ives-Quinn, but the extent of his collaboration with these popular progressives seems to have been appearing together on Ben Goldstein’s letterhead.³⁵⁷

As far as the city’s next mayor, O’Dwyer, blazed the path from mob-busting district attorney to Gracie Mansion that Rudy Giuliani would follow several decades later.³⁵⁸ He rose to national prominence as a special prosecutor, appointed by La Guardia, to bring down Murder, Inc. However, during the 1941 mayoral election, he ran a losing campaign as a Tammany Hall Democrat against the man who was instrumental in his rise to prominence.³⁵⁹ I was unable to locate any speeches or ephemera where O’Dwyer specifically promised to integrate New York’s baseball teams. There may very well be

³⁵⁵ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 122.

³⁵⁶ Campaign Brochure for Ben Davis, Jr., October 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>; it is worth noting how similar these slogans are to those on the signs that vexed MacPhail outside Yankee Stadium several months earlier.

³⁵⁷ If I mentioned every instance where I found Davis had exaggerated, I would not be able to use his autobiography as a source.

³⁵⁸ O’Dwyer features prominently in the definitive tome on mob-busting during this era; see Burton B. Turkus and Sid Feder, *Murder, Inc.*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003).

³⁵⁹ “NYC Mayor - Race Details - 1941,” OurCampaigns.com, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.ourcampaigns.com/RaceDetail.html?RaceID=79425>.

some in his papers, but we do know that besides lending his name to the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, he made campaign appearances in Black neighborhoods, where he called for the “full enforcement” of Ives-Quinn.

On one such occasion, at the Holy Trinity Baptist Church in Brooklyn, O’Dwyer told the parishioners that he was in favor of both the national and state FEPC. Moreover, he exclaimed that “these laws should not be dead letters” and “their basic purpose and practice must become the accepted attitude and practice of our city.” The closest he would come to calling for integrating baseball was when he said, “We know that there are great artists, scientists, craftsmen, athletes, and artisans among Negroes who rank with the best in their respective fields.”³⁶⁰ O’Dwyer’s Republican opponent, Justice J. Jonah Goldstein, also appeared on the Committee to End Jim Crow in Baseball’s letterhead as a supporter but took his campaign to win over the city’s Black and civil rights-minded voters to the pitcher’s mound at Yankee Stadium.

The Democrat’s candidate for mayor attended an exhibition game played by the two finalists in the recently completed Negro League World Series in September.³⁶¹ Before throwing out the ceremonial first pitch, Goldstein made a great show of writing the word “discrimination” on the ball and yelled “sock it!” as he tossed it to future Hall of Fame catcher Josh Gibson. The candidate then made a short but poignant address to the crowd. One can almost imagine Goldstein’s words ringing out over the old stadium public address system just as Lou Gehrig’s “luckiest man on the face of the Earth” speech had six years earlier. He opened his address by promising, “As mayor of New York, I

³⁶⁰ “O’Dwyer Asks End of ‘Jim Crowism’,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1945, <https://nyti.ms/3sCRvyr>.

³⁶¹ The *New York Times* story on this event says Goldstein threw out the first pitch of the Negro League World Series, but as that had just ended in a four-game sweep in Philadelphia, the two teams came up to Yankee Stadium simply to play exhibition games.

will confer immediately with leaders of the Leagues and do my utmost to assure Negro Americans equal rights in baseball.” As many others were doing at this time, Goldstein used the war to bolster his argument that discrimination in baseball was un-American:

Negro and white Americans were good enough to fight together as one willing all-American team on the same far-flung ball fields. Baseball is an American game, played in the American spirit of fairness and democracy. Baseball is not a Nazi game based on the hateful rules of so-called racial superiority. Every American, every true lover of clean and wholesome sport, loves baseball because it symbolizes our democratic national spirit. There should be only one test—the ability to play baseball.

The candidate’s effort to attract Black voters was consistent with his record, but their importance in this particular election was reflected in a recent article in the *New York Amsterdam News* that asserted “Harlem Vote Seen As Key To Mayoralty.”³⁶²

Admittedly, a paper published in Harlem might be somewhat biased about its electoral importance, but we need only look at the campaign speeches and appearances of the candidates vying to replace La Guardia to see how important the Black vote was.

Especially since, with La Guardia off the ballot, well over 500,000 Black and progressive voters in New York City were up for grabs—almost all of whom wanted the city’s baseball teams to respect the state’s new anti-discrimination law.

MacPhail Goes Rogue

On September 14th, MacPhail put out his own report in an incredibly underhanded fashion.³⁶³ He sent out a memorandum to Dodson and Johnson called “The

³⁶² Julius J. Adams, “Harlem Vote Seen As Key To Mayoralty,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 3, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/harlem-vote-seen-as-key-mayoralty/docview/226064100/se-2?accountid=11311>.

³⁶³ Larry MacPhail to Dan Dodson with Memorandum from Larry MacPhail “The Negro in Baseball” attached, September 14, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Negro in Baseball,” which he disingenuously told them was for the consideration of their committee but simultaneously he also sent out dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of copies. Oddly, it seemed like MacPhail sent a copy to anyone who might possibly be offended by it. Recipients included Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Elmer Carter, the commissioner investigating him. In addition, prominent Black publications and journalists received copies directly from MacPhail, even Sam Lacy got one.³⁶⁴

The four-page report was about as inflammatory as one might imagine given that it used “negro” instead of “Negro” throughout, which was then already considered offensive.³⁶⁵ It began with the complaint that “groups of political and social-minded drum-beaters are conducting pressure campaigns in an attempt to force major league clubs to sign negro players now employed by negro league clubs.” But, MacPhail wrote, “there are few, if any, negro players who could qualify for play in the major leagues at this time,” and he saw no point in signing Blacks so they could languish in the minor leagues. Furthermore, all those “negro players” were legally the property of teams in the Negro Leagues, which would collapse if their best players were poached by White baseball organizations. Those leagues, he pointed out, were thriving businesses that were generating jobs in the Black community, and they also just happened to be important

³⁶⁴ His cover letter to Lacey began generically explaining that he was serving on La Guardia’s baseball task force, which he insisted was formed by the mayor “undoubtedly” as a reaction to the threats from various pressure groups. But his concluding sentence indirectly acknowledged that he had been avoiding Lacy for almost half a year: “I still hope that something might be done towards an agreement on a national committee in the not too distant future”; Larry MacPhail to Sam Lacy, September 14, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁶⁵ MacPhail knew very well that “negro” was offensive in 1945. All through this document he wrote “negro baseball,” however, in his correspondence from this same period with Black baseball executives about renting Yankee Stadium, he always wrote “Negro baseball.” One example of many can be seen in Larry MacPhail to Gus Greenlee, April 21, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

revenue streams for some Major League teams, including his. MacPhail concluded that segregation remained in the best interests of the Major Leagues *and* the Negro Leagues. Therefore, he asserted that “the Yankees have no intention of signing negro players under contract or reservation to negro teams.”³⁶⁶ This report set off a huge public controversy in the weeks before the election, and letters demanding his removal from La Guardia’s committee flooded newsrooms and the mayor’s office.³⁶⁷ Much of the outcry, as evinced by headlines like “MacPhail Defies State FEPC,” centered on the idea that the Yankee boss was willfully violating the state’s new anti-discrimination law.³⁶⁸

However, the most quoted line in MacPhail’s manifesto, “I have no hesitancy in saying that the Yankees have no intention of signing negro players,” is not really in the document. The unedited comment is far less cringe-worthy read in context, but a less arrogant man would have foreseen how his qualifications about “players being under contract” would be removed for publication. And given that Negro League players were always free agents after their season’s ended, the way the line was edited better captures its meaning than what appears in the original report. MacPhail also drew fire for arguing for a continuation of segregation with only a vague “fig leaf” at the end about eventually allowing a “limited number of negro players” to be eligible for the Major Leagues, but only *after* the Negro Leagues got their acts together.³⁶⁹ It was Tygiel’s conclusion that

³⁶⁶ MacPhail, “The Negro in Baseball,” 4.

³⁶⁷ Memorandum from Fiorello La Guardia to Dan Dodson, October 8, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁶⁸ For examples of each see Nat Low, “Larry MacPhail Defies State FEPC,” *Daily Worker*, September 25, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/september-25-1945-page-10/docview/1917205855/se-2?accountid=35635>.

³⁶⁹ MacPhail, “The Negro in Baseball,” 4.

“MacPhail’s proposal would have created an illusion of progress while indefinitely delaying” integration.³⁷⁰

Ludlow Werner, editor of *The New York Age*, was one of many Black newsmen who received a copy of “The Negro in Baseball” directly from MacPhail. He began his searing two-page response to the Yankee owner explaining that his use of “negro” with a lowercase “n” was insulting. Then, after shredding the principal claims in the report, Werner cut to the chase, “the Ives-Quinn Act, now in effect, prohibits discrimination in employment because of race, creed, or religion,” and as “organized baseball is a business institution, the Yankees and all the other clubs operating with headquarters in New York State come under the law.” In what almost reads like a taunt, Werner told MacPhail that “your memorandum is not going to clear you in the event that some qualified Negro player—who might apply to the Yankees and is turned down because of your attitude—takes the matter to the State Commission Against Discrimination.”³⁷¹

Werner was not the only recipient who saw “The Negro in Baseball” as an attempt to either defy the new state law or protect himself from the commissioners who were supposed to enforce it. Dan Burley made a similar argument in the *New York Amsterdam News* when he asserted that MacPhail’s memo was part of his preparation for a “last-ditch fight that will surely come this fall and winter before the New York State Fair Employment Practices Commission on the subject of barring colored players from the three New York league clubs.”³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 69.

³⁷¹ Ludlow Werner to Larry MacPhail, September 22, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁷² Burley, “MacPhail and Color Bar,” Sep 29, 1945.

Davis, then in the middle of his re-election campaign, released a powerful rebuke of MacPhail that claimed his position was a threat to the very survival of Ives-Quinn. Therefore, he asserted that the “state FEPC has no other recourse but to use its most extreme powers to compel the compliance of Larry MacPhail...to protect the State law, guaranteeing equal employment to every American citizen, regardless of race, creed or color.” If it let him “get away with this challenge to its existence, then it might as well not have been created.” He added that “MacPhail’s statement was an insult to the Negro people, to the baseball fans of New York City and to every fair minded American who cherishes baseball as our major sport.” Davis then declared that he would be “immediately communicating [with] the state FEPC” about MacPhail “and asking them to act at once.”³⁷³ Many letters and editorials made similar arguments. MacPhail’s defiance was not only seen as an attempt to block the integration of Major League Baseball but the survival of the state’s new anti-discrimination law.

Elmer Carter’s icy response to MacPhail began by mentioning that his report was similar to what was read to him in their meeting back in August. However, he continued, “I do not wish at this time to indulge in any critical comment of your statement by correspondence, for, by this time, you have received a letter inviting you to participate in a conference at the New York Athletic Club.”³⁷⁴ Unfortunately, we must rely on Mann’s detailed, but clearly biased narrative for that showdown between the baseball executives and the state commissioners.

³⁷³ “Davis Raps MacPhail Report,” *Daily Worker*, October 2, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/october-2-1945-page-10/docview/1917200531/se-2?accountid=35635>.

³⁷⁴ Elmer A. Carter to Larry MacPhail, September 24, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

Mann began his account, “Governor Dewey’s Ives-Quinn Law Committee of five descended upon New York City in late September without warning.” Of course, as we have just seen in Carter’s letter, this conference was no surprise, and the State Commission Against Discrimination actually had offices in Manhattan by this time. It was only after the proceedings began, according to Mann, that the commissioners revealed that the purpose for the conference was for each team to sign a prepared written statement pledging to follow Ives-Quinn. Mann noted that “for once Larry MacPhail’s explosive nature was beaten to the fuse. It was Horace Stoneham...who hit the ceiling.” He wrote that the livid Giants’ owner took it upon himself to speak for the other clubs “denouncing the Albany committee, individually and collectively, for daring to force the issue in such a manner.” It was, Stoneham snarled, “a coercive effort in race relations which his New York Giants had always solved and would continue to solve without signed pledges, before or after the election!” Even Rickey refused to sign the declaration which, given his secret dealings with Carter, probably did not take either of them by surprise. At this point, the meeting seems to have come to a screeching halt and, according to Rickey’s scribe, “The Ives-Quinn committee members returned to Governor Dewey without signed ammunition for the forthcoming issues at the polls [and so] the Negro vote was still at large for whoever could make the deepest impression on it.”³⁷⁵ Given how much Rickey admired Dewey personally and supported him politically, it is interesting that he comes out no better than La Guardia in Mann’s account, which he most likely had editorial control over. This suggests that as much as Rickey did not want

³⁷⁵ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 122-123.

communists to get credit for his historic achievement, he was also not crazy about conservatives stealing his thunder.

A Mayor Betrayed

On September 28th, Dodson distributed a “confidential” first draft of the Mayor’s Committee on Baseball report to La Guardia and his colleagues. Somehow, it took seventeen days for the committee to meet to discuss its contents, and when it finally convened, only five members showed up. Among those present was Rickey, who Mann falsely wrote, had resigned from the committee *before* Robinson’s signing to avoid a conflict of interests.³⁷⁶ Clearly, the committee’s report, which was essentially done and dusted, was being slow walked. This became even more obvious when Dodson did not distribute minutes from this meeting—all of half a page in length—until October 22nd, when Robinson was on his way to Montreal for the historic press conference. Moreover, those minutes state that before the final report could be released, the Dodger general manager was to get a chance to review it one last time. This seems to have given Rickey the power to put the report on ice indefinitely.

So, why exactly did Rickey choose to sign Robinson when he did, instead of when he wanted to? According to conventional history, in the middle of October, La Guardia made a stunning request to Rickey using Dodson as an intermediary. He wanted the Dodger general manager’s “okay” to announce on his weekly radio broadcast scheduled for October 21st that “baseball would shortly begin signing Negro players, and

³⁷⁶ Rickey sent a resignation letter to La Guardia two days *after* Robinson’s signing was announced to the world; Branch Rickey to Fiorello La Guardia, October 25, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

that it was the direct result of the Mayor's Committee." Rickey then asked La Guardia, through Dodson, if he could hold off for one week and the mayor agreed. Robinson was then directed by the Dodgers to fly immediately to Montreal. His signing would be announced on October 23rd, at a hastily organized press conference with only the local media present.³⁷⁷ But this account is predicated on La Guardia knowing in advance that Rickey had come to terms with a Black ballplayer, and there is simply no evidence anywhere to that effect.

I suggest a more plausible scenario that is based on a cryptic note that Dodson wrote just before Robinson's signing. Though the piece is undated, the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame says it comes from October 1945. It reads: "PLEASE STOP RELEASE OF REPORT OF MAYOR'S COMMITTEE ON BASEBALL IF MAYOR LA GUARDIA DOES NOT RELEASE IT ON SUNDAY BROADCAST." Keep in mind, we know that Dodson gave the first draft of the Mayor's Committee on Baseball to La Guardia on September 28, 1945.³⁷⁸ It is not a stretch to imagine that the mayor either read or had Dodson talk him through its contents. Therefore, rather than La Guardia asking for Rickey's "okay" to announce that baseball's color barrier was about to break on his October 21st radio show, he probably wanted to read the report on the air. As pointed out earlier, the minutes of the final meeting mention that the Dodger general manager was allowed a final review before the report went public. Therefore, La Guardia probably asked Rickey, through Dodson, if he would be done reviewing the report by the 21st so he could read it on his radio show.

³⁷⁷ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 125.

³⁷⁸ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 117.

How very different the narrative of baseball's integration would be if La Guardia had released his report before Rickey signed Robinson. It contained bombshells, such as:

We recommend that...the New York clubs integrate Negroes at whatever level their abilities merit both in the major leagues and in the farm systems [and that] the Negro baseball leagues be admitted into the field of organized baseball and come under the commissioner's jurisdiction and...be classified at whatever level their quality of performance allows whether it be AA or D.³⁷⁹

The mayor's broadcast would have made front pages across America, and Robinson's subsequent signing would have appeared to be a response to La Guardia's pressure.

Rickey was too smart and too concerned with his legacy to see it otherwise. And while both Dodson and Mann have written that the mayor wanted to announce that a New York City team was about to sign a Black ballplayer because of *his* baseball committee, I have demonstrated *ad nauseum* how both were willing to shade the truth in the service of Branch Rickey. It is hardly surprising that their widely accepted accounts make La Guardia look totally unscrupulous and justify the Deacon's stringing him along with a committee meant to neutralize the protests before stabbing him in the back.

Many considered the issue moot when La Guardia's baseball committee finally released its findings a month after Robinson's signing was announced in Montreal. The report's conclusion, that "sheer prejudice and tradition have heretofore motivated the exclusion of Negroes from organized ball," would have been far more explosive if Rickey had not already become baseball's answer to Abraham Lincoln.³⁸⁰ While Mann explained that Rickey had Robinson introduced in Montreal to protect him from being

³⁷⁹ Mann, *The Jackie Robinson Story*, 121-122.

³⁸⁰ Nat Low, "Report to Mayor Demands End of Baseball Jimcrow," *Daily Worker*, November 20, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.nypl.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/november-20-1945-page-10/docview/1917205989/se-2?accountid=35635>.

subjected to a media circus, it was also a way to prevent politicians and pressure groups in New York City from basking in the glow of this historic accomplishment.³⁸¹

Rickey Meets the Press

When the media circus caught up with Rickey, he spoke of Charlie Thomas and his colorblind commitment to bringing championships to Brooklyn. Political pressure and New York State's new law, he insisted, had nothing to do with it. Still, there was much speculation in the press that this move was a reaction to Ives-Quinn. Some even claimed that Rickey deliberately signed a lesser Negro League player to avoid having to call him up to the Major Leagues.³⁸² Even baseball's bible, the *Sporting News*, called it a "legalistic move."³⁸³

However, in an interview with legendary baseball writer Dan Daniel for the *New York World-Telegram*, Rickey gave a much more nuanced answer to his question about Ives-Quinn. "The time is fast nearing when every professional baseball club operating in the State of New York will be forced to sign Negro players," the Dodger chief executive admitted. Daniel then pointed out to his readers that Rickey was referring to the state's new anti-discrimination law, which had taken effect on July 1st. Keep in mind that Rickey was being interviewed, not only in the wake of Robinson's signing, but several weeks after that contentious session with state commissioners tasked to enforce Ives-Quinn. We can only imagine what Chairman Turner told the three executives as they stormed out of the meeting. Despite admitting that integration in New York was now

³⁸¹ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 288-298.

³⁸² This is nonsense, because Rickey had come to terms with five Black players before the 1946 season, including Don Newcome and Roy Campanella.

³⁸³ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 74.

inevitable, Rickey insisted to Daniel that he “signed Robinson in no contemplation of legal penalties for failure to give Negro players a fair chance.”³⁸⁴

Pressed as to why he was signing Robinson for his minor league affiliate and not his big-league club, Rickey explained that he had only rated out as a B or C level prospect by the team scouts and “may not be anywhere near ready for Montreal.” He added that Robinson was only starting out that high because he was too old to play in the low minors, and then echoed MacPhail’s conclusions that there were currently no players in the Negro Leagues then qualified to play in Major League Baseball.³⁸⁵ Daniel did not push back; he was about as baseball establishment as it got. However, a sportswriter from the *Daily Worker* or any Black newspaper would have rattled off the names of dozens of Negro League ballplayers who could have cracked any Major League roster in 1945.

To get an idea how much talent was trapped behind baseball’s color barrier, consider that Satchel Paige was statistically just the fourth best pitcher on the Kansas City Monarchs when he played with Robinson during the 1945 season. And yet, he was still good enough three years later (at the age of 41) to jump directly to the Major Leagues and play a vital role in the Cleveland Indians winning the American League pennant and the World Series. Years of lies about Black players would be utterly exposed when Jackie dominated the International League.³⁸⁶ In fact, his play clearly merited promotion to the Major Leagues during the 1946 season, which would likely have meant a National

³⁸⁴ Daniel, “All Met Teams Soon Must Sign Negro Players—Rickey,” October 25, 1945.

³⁸⁵ Daniel, “All Met Teams Soon Must Sign Negro Players—Rickey,” October 25, 1945.

³⁸⁶ “Satchel Paige,” National Baseball Hall of Fame, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://baseballhall.org/hall-of-famers/paige-satchel>.

League pennant for the Brooklyn Dodgers.³⁸⁷ But Rickey had his own timetable for the integration of Major League Baseball, and so did MacPhail.

The day after the news of Robinson's signing broke in the papers, the Yankee owner began carpet-bombing White baseball executives with copies of his manifesto against integration.³⁸⁸ This time his report went out to Commissioner Chandler, the heads of both leagues, the other owners, the president of the minor leagues, even Branch Rickey got one! All had identical cover letters that explained how MacPhail had been asked to represent the American League in the group formed at the spring league meetings to examine the race issue. This is presumably meant to give his treatise a patina of expertise, but MacPhail being MacPhail, there is no mention that his group never met. He showed even more *chutzpah* years later when he insisted that by signing Jackie Robinson, Rickey had sabotaged their "committee charged with working out a method for bringing Negro players into organized baseball...before it could report."³⁸⁹

For our purposes, the most significant thing in this cover letter comes where MacPhail wrote that "the passage of the Quinn-Ives Law designated to end racial discrimination in the State of New York" led to the mayor's appointment of a committee to study the problem, of which he was a member. It is also striking that he concluded by informing his recipients that "the enclosed memorandum was submitted by the undersigned to the Quinn-Ives Commission and to the Mayor's Committee on Unity as

³⁸⁷ The Dodgers finished in a tie with the St. Louis Cardinals and lost a one-game playoff. This despite getting by with Cookie Lavagetto at third and his .657 OPS. Jackie Robinson had a career .887 OPS in the Major Leagues, and since he played shortstop for the Monarchs, moving to third would have been easy.

³⁸⁸ Larry MacPhail to Richard Muckerman, October 25, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁸⁹ Holland, "Feuds, Finale and a Fairy Tale," August 31, 1959.

an expression of opinion by the writer opposed to the signing of Negro players presently under contract to Negro clubs.”³⁹⁰

Baseball Sides with MacPhail

Given that the business of baseball was mostly conducted outside the Jim Crow states, the strong support among owners and executives for MacPhail’s segregationist manifesto provides a disturbing snapshot of just how racist America actually was in 1945. Clark Griffith, whose team played in the nation’s capital, sent MacPhail a letter thanking him for sending his report, which he said, “would solve the whole problem.” It was his view, he wrote, that their league needed to help build up the Negro Leagues while ensuring they “remain as a unit unto themselves...It is my belief that the people of this country would rather have such a set up as this than to try and mix it up...”³⁹¹

Connie Mack of the Philadelphia Phillies—one of two Major League franchises in Pennsylvania, the first state to ban slavery—also had a financial interest in the survival of his Negro League tenants. He sent a letter of thanks to MacPhail for his statement but was much more unguarded in his comments than Griffith: “It was a great disappointment to me to see that Branch Rickey had signed a negro for his Montreal Baseball Club. If all the Major League Club owners would just let Branch have the negroes, I feel that we all [would] be better off in the long run.”³⁹² As for the other team from Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Pirates owner, Bill Benswanger, wrote back to MacPhail, “Thanks for your

³⁹⁰ Larry MacPhail to Branch Rickey, October 25, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁹¹ Clark Griffith to Larry MacPhail, October 26, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁹² Conny Mack to Larry MacPhail, October 29, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

dope on the negro baseball player...your opinions ride side by side with my own.” Then he added that he felt Rickey’s signing of Robinson “did not help either Organized Baseball or the negro.”³⁹³ These are shocking comments coming from Benswanger, a Jew from New York who once had some in the Black press convinced that he had tried to sign Negro League stars, including Josh Gibson, but was prevented by Landis.³⁹⁴

At this time, William G. Bramham oversaw all the minor leagues across the United States and Canada that developed talent for the Major Leagues. He wrote to MacPhail that he was “almost one hundred percent in agreement” with everything MacPhail put forth in his report. Bramham then professed, or perhaps confessed, to being “one of those with no ill-feeling toward the negro race [and] a consistent friend of their people.” As such, he believed, at least in his home state of North Carolina, they would endorse MacPhail’s suggestions. Still, the head of the minor leagues took issue with that vague “sop” at the end of the proposal about *maybe* allowing a few Blacks in the Majors one day, *after* they proved they possessed excellent character and skill. This bothered Bramham, “I sincerely believe that aiding them to develop within their own ranks is much more conducive to the furtherance of their best interest than in mixing the races. It is this belief upon my part that prevents me from giving one hundred percent endorsement to your views expressed in your letter...”³⁹⁵ If the responses on file in the Baseball Hall of Fame are any guide, it appears that the only baseball executive not in

³⁹³ William Benswanger to Larry MacPhail, October 26, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁹⁴ Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 39-40.

³⁹⁵ William G. Bramham to Larry MacPhail, October 29, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

complete agreement with MacPhail's segregationist solution to their "race problem" objected to holding out the possibility of limited integration in the future.

Will Harridge, president of the American League, thought MacPhail's letter was so important it merited an immediate reply by telegram. He cabled that the "memorandum submitted to Quinn Ives Commission [was] very constructive," and suggested it would make a "perfect press release...at this particular time."³⁹⁶ Harridge was writing just two days after news of the historic press conference in Montreal first appeared in the papers. He apparently believed that the "The Negro in Baseball" could be presented to the public as a new league plan to deal with integration and thereby undercut Rickey. But MacPhail shot back a telegram later that day that pointed out that his "memorandum was already published in the *Sporting News* about a month ago, so I do not believe anything is to be gained by further press release at this time." The fact that the President of the American League had not noticed MacPhail's bombshell report in the *Sporting News*, or been alerted to its publication by his underlings, might suggest how indifferent the owners and executives outside of New York were to struggles for racial equality taking place there. MacPhail's telegram ends with the suggestion that, if the rest of the teams approve his report, "I think we could take a constructive league position at some future date."³⁹⁷ That "future date" would come the following August, when MacPhail led a secret revolt of the owners against baseball's great emancipator.

We have found no record of Commissioner Chandler replying to MacPhail about his memorandum "The Negro in Baseball." He was still holding on to his seat in the

³⁹⁶ Telegram from Will Harridge to Larry MacPhail, October 26, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁹⁷ Telegram from Larry MacPhail to Will Harridge, October 26, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

United States Senate and carried on in the finest tradition of that institution by avoiding a position on Robinson's signing. During this post-signing tumult, anxious baseball executives in both the Major Leagues and the Negro Leagues wrote Chandler and asked him to step in and basically prevent the collapse of the *status quo* which benefited White and Black businessmen alike.³⁹⁸ The commissioner-elect politely replied that he would look into it. He seemed to never get around to it. After thoroughly researching Chandler's role in the integration of baseball, Tygiel concluded that his contribution amounted to "endorsement by abstinence."³⁹⁹ However, the one-term commissioner saw his role quite differently. By the time he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1982, he had practically anointed himself "baseball's great co-emancipator." Specifically, he told the large crowd gathered to honor him in Cooperstown that "I figured that someday I'd have to meet my Maker and He'd ask me why I didn't let that boy play. I was afraid that if I told him, it was because he was black, that wouldn't have been sufficient. I told Rickey to bring him on." Chandler also claimed to have had a secret meeting with Rickey after Robinson's signing was announced where he pledged to do everything in his power to help smooth his way. Chandler even claimed that his failure to have his contract renewed by the owners was punishment for the role he played integrating baseball. Rickey denied all of this.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ C.W. Posey to A.B. Chandler, November 1, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>; Clark Griffith to Albert Chandler, November 13, 1945, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Digital Collections Portal, <https://collection.baseballhall.org>.

³⁹⁹ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 82.

⁴⁰⁰ Berkow, "Where Did Happy Stand on Jackie?"

MacPhail's Putsch Fails

Both Rickey and Chandler do agree that almost a year to the day after Robinson first walked into the Dodger offices, a big showdown over his promotion to the Majors took place at a joint league meeting in Chicago.⁴⁰¹ MacPhail chaired a committee of owners who presented a wide-ranging report on baseball's future challenges. The "Race Question," as it was termed in the document, was just one of several subjects it addressed. However, in Rickey's telling, it was the reason why each copy of the report was confiscated by Ford Frick after the meeting. The section on race borrows heavily from MacPhail's earlier report but now that Robinson was tearing up the International League, there was a new ominous data point to consider:

The employment of a Negro on one AAA League Club has resulted in a tremendous increase in Negro attendance at all games in which the player appeared. The percentage of Negro attendance at some games in Newark and Baltimore was in excess of 50%. A situation might be presented, if Negroes participate in Major League games, in which the preponderance of Negro attendance in parks such as the Yankee Stadium, the Polo Grounds, and Comiskey Park could conceivably threaten the value of the Major League franchises owned by these clubs.⁴⁰²

Chandler later claimed that one owner, presumably Stoneham of the Giants, complained that "if we let Robinson play, they'd burn down the Polo Grounds the first time the Dodgers came in for a series."⁴⁰³

After MacPhail made his case, according to Rickey, some kind of secret vote took place to adopt his report on the "Race Question" as official league policy and somehow

⁴⁰¹ Dave Bohmer, "Ford Frick and Jackie Robinson: the Enabler" in *Jackie: Perspectives on 42*, ed. Bill Nowlin and Glen Sparks (Phoenix, AZ: Society of American Baseball Research, Inc., 2021), 120.

⁴⁰² Larry MacPhail, et al, "Report: For Submission to National and American Leagues on 27 August, 1946," Papers of A.B. Chandler, Box 162, Important Papers 1945-7, University of Kentucky Libraries, Lexington, Kentucky.

⁴⁰³ Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 81.

block Robinson's future promotion to Brooklyn.⁴⁰⁴ Chandler backed Rickey's version of events after he was no longer commissioner, but added that the attempt only failed because *he* invoked his authority to overrule the other 15 clubs.⁴⁰⁵ But Rickey told Harold Rosenthal, a reporter for the *New York Herald*, that Chandler never spoke during that infamous meeting, and "if he doesn't approve that contract, I have him in Brooklyn Federal court in 48 hours."⁴⁰⁶

Closing Arguments

Even though New York State had the largest African American population in the country, until the summer of 1945, it was legal for private employers to refuse to hire Black workers simply because of the color of their skin. Had Rickey signed Robinson before Ives-Quinn, he might have been at the mercy of the baseball establishment, which tried unsuccessfully to shut down his great experiment in the summer of 1946. We will never know whether he had to have the law on his side before breaking "baseball's unwritten law." The important thing is that Rickey, who left nothing to chance, felt he needed this anti-discrimination law. He said as much when he exclaimed to his wife "They can't stop me now!" after reading in the newspaper that it had been signed by the governor. Ives-Quinn was indeed, in the words of Rickey's biographer, Lee Lowenfish,

⁴⁰⁴ Lee Lowenfish, "Rickey Being Rickey: His February 1948 Wilberforce University Speech as an Ironic Waterloo in His Brooklyn Dodgers Career," *Outside the Lines: a Publication of the Society for American Baseball Research Business of Baseball Committee* (Summer 2009), 22.

⁴⁰⁵ Technically, Chandler could only have stopped Robinson by invoking his authority to act in the best interests of baseball, however Ford Frick, president of the National League, could have tried to stop the Dodger's from offering Jackie a Major League contract.

⁴⁰⁶ Berkow, "Where Did Happy Stand on Jackie?"; actually, Rickey would have wanted to file for an injunction in a State court room.

the “impetus from forces outside of baseball [which he believed he] needed to start the ball rolling.”⁴⁰⁷

Robinson also understood that “forces outside of baseball” were responsible for his historic opportunity. According to Davis, after he signed with the Dodgers, a small reception was thrown for him in New York by “twenty-five trade union, Negro, progressive and Communist leaders.” From his short account, we do not know if this celebration included leadership from the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee, such as Goldstein or Meyerson. Only that the gathering included Robeson, “who [Robinson] commended for his contributions to the struggle,” and Davis, who Robinson spoke “a few kind words [to about] his city council resolution, [which] he had heard about on the West Coast.” The two civil rights leaders, Davis later wrote, “were happy because we felt [Robinson] was aware of the long struggle put up by the labor and progressive movement” to break baseball’s color barrier. Sadly, the Davis narrative continues, Robinson “soon forgot that it was the struggles of the people... that put him where he was.”⁴⁰⁸ This probably alluded to his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee on July 18, 1949, where he served as the establishment’s witness against Robeson. The fact that Robinson’s appearance in Washington was made largely at the urging of Rickey, brings us to our final point.⁴⁰⁹

The Rickey-centric history of Major League Baseball’s integration, which began with Arthur Mann’s books and articles, still thrives in the present, with Harrison Ford playing Rickey and Chadwick Boseman playing Jackie Robinson, on streaming platforms

⁴⁰⁷ Lowenfish, *Baseball’s Ferocious Gentleman*, 359.

⁴⁰⁸ Davis, *Communist Councilman from Harlem*, 133-134.

⁴⁰⁹ Gilbert King, “What Robeson Said,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, September 13, 2011, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-paul-robeson-said-77742433/>.

such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. But this version, as Lamb points out, is the version of history that Rickey himself “dictated to sportswriters and biographers...and circulated in the days, weeks, years, and decades after the signing of Robinson.”⁴¹⁰ And, we have presented numerous examples where this widely accepted narrative relies upon questionable facts and manipulated timelines. So, the question is why did it take so long for scholars to begin correcting what Lamb calls “an injustice not only to history but also to those who worked for years to end segregated baseball”?⁴¹¹ After all, mainstream reporters like Jimmy Powers and Dan Daniel were writing back in 1945 that Ives-Quinn forced Rickey to try out Black ballplayers shortly after the law was passed and sign Robinson shortly after the law took effect.

It is my theory that Rickey’s exalted place in history is at least in part a legacy of the postwar Red Scare. Keep in mind, the infamous pogrom in Hollywood against artists with communist sympathies began all the way back in July 1946 but Senator McCarthy would not be censured until December 1954.⁴¹² As Rickey, who was devoutly religious and fervently anti-communist, put up a picture of Abraham Lincoln behind his desk and anointed himself baseball’s great emancipator, many of the activists who worked so hard for so long to desegregate professional baseball and end workplace discrimination were being systematically persecuted and sometimes prosecuted. What reporter with a family to feed would want to correct the historical record to acknowledge the years that Paul Robeson struggled to open the door for Jackie Robinson when the United States

⁴¹⁰ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 16-17.

⁴¹¹ Lamb, *Conspiracy*, 17.

⁴¹² Gary Baum and Daniel Miller, “The Hollywood Reporter, After 65 Years, Addresses Role in Blacklist,” *Hollywood Reporter*, November 19, 2012, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-features/blacklist-thr-addresses-role-65-391931/#>; “Army-McCarthy Hearings,” History.com, September 12, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/army-mccarthy-hearings>.

government was destroying his career and refusing to let him travel abroad to work?⁴¹³

And what scholar hoping for tenure would want to credit Ben Davis, Jr. for his determined struggle to force baseball teams (and businesses) in New York City to hire Blacks when the United States government was sending him to prison because of his association with the Communist Party?⁴¹⁴ Perhaps it was a coincidence, but the narrative of baseball's integration only really began to change once America changed. Prior to that, there was little to enthusiasm to admit that, in the words of Ta-Nehisi Coates, "activists generated, and applied, enough pressure on the system to affect change."⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ "Paul Robeson," Wikipedia, accessed March 6, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Robeson.

⁴¹⁴ Davis, *Communist Councilman from Harlem*, 180-186; Robeson and Davis were headliners at the Negro Freedom Rally in 1945, but became enemies of the state once the Cold War ramped up.

⁴¹⁵ Engler, "The 'Make Me Do It!' Myth."

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