but the Negro was never promoted to engineer. Nevertheless, the fireman's job was a relatively good one. Between the two World Wars, it paid the highest wage earned by any Negro worker in the South.

In depression times, the fireman's job was eyed hungrily by worried white workers. The bad years—1921, 1931, and 1934—saw drives to "clear our lines of Negroes;" some Negro firemen were actually shot out of their cabs.

In 1941, to make matters worse, 20 major railroads and 14 all-white railroad brotherhoods signed a "promotional agreement" barring Negroes from the diesel engines which were replacing coal burners on Southern lines. In time, the agreement put many colored firemen out of work.

In 1949, the U. S. Supreme Court threw out the "promotional agreement" and ruled that all Negroes then employed would keep their seniority. The court also declared that newly hired Negro firemen would have to qualify for possible promotion to engineer.

Basing its move on the Supreme Court decision, the Provisional Committee for the Organization of Colored Locomotive Firemen, organized by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, sued one of the white railroad brotherhoods for damages and won an award of $30,000.

When the Railway Labor Act was amended in 1951 to permit a union shop, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters won a clause providing that Negro railmen would not be kept off the job because they were denied full membership by the white brotherhoods.

The major breakthrough came in the autumn of 1955. The Switchmen's Union of North America, organized in the North, East and West, petitioned the National Mediation Board for the right to represent the operating employees of the Central Railroad of Georgia.

There were 234 whites and 120 Negroes among the 354 employees eligible to vote in the election. Over a hundred Negroes were members of the Provisional Committee for

the Organization of Colored Locomotive Firemen, and there was no doubt that their votes would swing the election. Back in 1950, the Switchmen's Union had dropped the color bar from its constitution. It was ready to assure Negro switchmen and brakemen the equality denied them by other brotherhoods, including unsegregated meetings.

A series of historic meetings between white representatives of the Switchmen's Union and colored members of the Provisional Committee were held in Macon, Savannah, Atlanta and Columbus. Together, they ironed out a cooperative agreement and made plans for a widespread organizing drive. Seven months later, the Switchmen's Union of North America, winning the election by a comfortable margin, became one of the official bargaining agents of operating employees on the Central Railroad of Georgia. For the first time, Negroes became members of one of the Big Five operating rail unions.

Another great advance came in the North, when the Pennsylvania Railroad hired its first Negro brakeman. Pennsylvania, like most American railroads, always had a lily-white hiring policy on operating jobs. But in 1953, the New York State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD) began checking complaints that Pennsylvania had turned down qualified Negro brakemen because of their race. On September 9, 1953, SCAD held an important conference. Among those present were representatives of the Pennsylvania; the New York, New Haven and Hartford; and the New York Central as well as spokesmen for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen; the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen; and the Order of Railroad Conductors. The railroads agreed to hire without regard to race, creed, color or national origin in every job category, and the brotherhoods promised to go along.

In November 1953, the Pennsylvania offered brakemen jobs to three of the Negroes who had filed complaints and