and other smelly chemicals by hand to make rubber for tires. "Automation" was unknown in those days. The work was backbreaking and the pay was low. But this was the only job in the industry open to a Negro outside of janitors' work.

It took another war before Negroes got their first big break. During the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, the labor shortage got so bad that "ammo" trucks were running on their rims. Skilled tireworkers were sent back from the front to meet the shortage.

At the Firestone plant, the chairman of the local's executive board made a sensible suggestion:

"Let's promote those Negro janitors."

The company refused. But the union appealed to the Army and the Army wanted the labor shortage licked. Soon Negroes began moving into most skilled production jobs.

Before long, there was another problem. The milling room was no longer the inferno it had been. New pelletizing machines and Banbury mixing machines were in use; but, white men came with them as operators. The union asked that Negro workers also be assigned to the new machines—and won the arbitration cases that grew out of these grievances. But, when the first Negro operator of a Banbury machine went on the job, the white workers walked out.

Calling the rebels in one by one, the union executive board pointed to an agreement with the company barring discrimination and gave the workers just one hour to get back to work. Only one man stayed out past the deadline.

Today, colored tireworkers enjoy plant-wide seniority, and are to be found in practically every department, including the highly skilled tire-building jobs. For a number of years, separate locker rooms and cafeterias were the rule at the Firestone plant; in time, however, the union convinced management that the workers wanted no such segregation.

Now let's take a look at Tuscaloosa, Ala., home of a Goodrich Rubber Co. plant. Not far away are the gates of Alabama University, where, in September 1955, rioting students and townspeople protested enrollment of the university's first Negro student, Autherine Lucy.

Early press reports, later given the lie by Tuscaloosa's Police Chief, charged that the Tuscaloosa local of the United Rubber Workers Union had aided, or at least condoned, the riot. Some university students who were also rubber workers may possibly have been part of the mob. But the union's executive board promptly condemned the riot.

Nor was this the first time that the Goodrich local spoke out against race prejudice. In 1954, Goodrich workers in Tuscaloosa were on strike for five weeks because management had unjustly fired a Negro. When the union won at arbitration, the whites carried their Negro fellow worker back into the plant on their shoulders. The Tuscaloosa local won this anti-discrimination battle without need of help from its international office.

Nor was help needed by a URW local in Waco, Tex., in 1955, when the upgrading of a Negro to the tire-building department caused a wildcat walkout at the General Tire plant. The local's white officers told the International: "We can handle it ourselves." And handle it they did, despite threatening letters from the "KKK" and gloomy predictions that the officers faced certain defeat in the next union election. Within two days, the rebels were back at work side by side with the Negro worker whose promotion they had protested. There were no more incidents.

About 95 per cent of the discrimination cases reported to the Rubber Workers Fair Employment Practices Department are successfully handled through regular local grievance machinery. Sometimes, as in Jackson, Miss., the International has to step in to keep a situation from exploding or to strengthen the hand of local leadership.