
The Party Line and the Color Line: The American Communist Party the *Daily Worker*, and Jackie Robinson

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Baseball, mom, apple pie—and the Communist Party? An organization so routinely damned as “un-American” would seem to many to be the most unlikely partner imaginable for that triptych of patriotic icons. But in a posthumous echo of the Popular Front slogan that “Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism,” recent writers have credited the now-moribund Communist Party of the United States, and the Party’s newspaper the *Daily Worker*, with playing an important role in one of the key turning points in sport, and indeed American, history, the breaking of Major League baseball’s color line by Jackie Robinson in 1947.¹

This is certainly consistent with the verdict that the *Worker*² passed on its (and the Communist Party’s) efforts when it greeted Robinson’s promotion to the Dodgers in April 1947, from the Brooklyn club’s Montreal farm team, with the self-congratulatory headline, “Daily Worker Led War on Baseball Jimcrow.”³ “The campaign to end discrimination against Negroes in America’s National Pastime began back in 1936 with the launching of a Daily Worker sports section,” the *Worker* declared, from which “it broadened to include millions of democratically minded fans.”⁴ Lester Rodney, the paper’s long time sports editor, reported that a veteran baseball writer had said to him “you guys can take a bow,” when Robinson’s name was announced in his first game with the Dodgers.⁵ And in August 1947, the paper recounted how it “went to bat for Satch [Paige] and all the other great Negro players,” that the “hue and cry” raised by its efforts had “put the owners on the spot,” and that “finally the walls came down.”⁶

One would look in vain, however, for any such tribute to the Party or the *Worker* in other early accounts of the chain of events leading up to the integration of Major League

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Baseball. The first chroniclers of this important story were its two principals, Dodger President and General Manager Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson. Through the writings of sportswriter Arthur Mann, a Rickey confidante and sometime assistant, and a series of autobiographical accounts authorized by Robinson, the integration of baseball unfolded primarily as a story of Rickey and Robinson's individual initiative and courage.⁷

Neither Robinson nor Mann recognized the Communist Party or the *Daily Worker* as having played any role in Rickey's and Robinson's accomplishment. Most pointedly, an effusive tribute to the press's role in breaking the color line in Robinson's 1948 account, written by Wendell Smith, "saluted" no fewer than 25 writers in both the black and the mainstream white press "who supported the campaign on behalf of the Negro ball player," but made no mention of the *Worker*, or its sports editor Lester Rodney.⁸ The Communist Party and the *Worker* are similarly absent from the more recent memoirs by Robinson's widow and daughter.⁹

The Party is slightly more visible in Mann's work, but only slightly. Mann writes that New York City Councilman Benjamin Davis—identified as "one of the eleven Communists recently sentenced by Judge Medina"—is credited with a 1945 election year "appeal to the sports minded voter" by issuing a pamphlet depicting a black soldier killed in action, with the message "Good enough to die for his country but not good enough for organized baseball."¹⁰ That is all. Mann's description of the "social minded forces rising in several quarters," which led Rickey to "accelerat[e] his efforts" in 1945, is otherwise devoted to major party figures, notably New York Governor Thomas Dewey and New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.¹¹

These more or less "official" texts defined the essential outlines of the Robinson story as it would be told in the many publications which thereafter would chronicle this national epic, especially those by sportswriters, who for a long time held an exclusive claim on the territory.¹² Rickey and Robinson dominate these works, with broader social and political pressures for antidiscrimination action in baseball playing a decidedly subsidiary role, if acknowledged at all. As veteran sportswriter Maury Allen explained, "Nobody pushed Branch Rickey. He had a master plan, a set timetable for everything, including the signing of a black player."¹³ With very few exceptions, neither the Communist Party nor the *Daily Worker* receive any mention at all in these works, let alone recognition as playing a meaningful role in baseball's integration process.¹⁴ Nor did the Party or its paper figure in the low budget 1950 motion picture *The Jackie Robinson Story*, which starred Robinson as himself and on which Mann worked. The same is true of what is surely the most widely seen account of these events, the 1994 Ken Burns *Baseball* television documentary, as well as that PBS - series's best selling companion book, both of which adhered tightly to a Rickey-Robinson focus, with brief mention also made of the efforts of the black press.¹⁵

However, beginning in the 1970s, the number of writers who granted a role for the *Worker* in the assault on baseball's color line increased sharply. Early advocates included several scholars who noted the Party's and the *Worker's* involvement in the baseball integration issue as an adjunct to their principal concern with Communist Party, not baseball, history. These included several publications by Mark Naison, a leading historian of Communist Party activity in the black community in the years of the Great Depression, notably a 1976 interview with a long-since-forgotten Lester Rodney in the socialist news weekly

In These Times.¹⁶ In a 1979 article in *Radical America*, Naison asserted that the “*Worker* writers made a real contribution” to the integration effort, that their work was accompanied by picketing, petition drives and political activity by Communist Party activists and politicians, and (and somewhat overstating matters, at least as of then) that “virtually every book on the subject mentions the Party’s contribution.”¹⁷ Similarly, the entry on the *Worker* in a collective history of the American radical press concluded, that

perhaps most important, and least remembered, is [the *Worker’s*] continual campaign for integration in professional baseball. The campaign finally bore fruit at least in part because of the persuasive pressure *Daily Worker* sports editor Lester Rodney was able to exert on Brooklyn Dodger General Manager Branch Rickey to give Jackie Robinson the chance to break the color barrier.¹⁸

The breakthrough to a wider, sports-minded public for such positive evaluations of the Party and the *Worker’s* contribution to the battle against the color line came with the publication of Jules Tygiel’s *Baseball’s Great Experiment* in 1983. Tygiel’s classic account, which remains the most comprehensive history of the integration of baseball, asserted that the Communist Party, and particularly the *Daily Worker*, had “played a major role in elevating the issues of baseball’s racial policies to the level of public consciousness.”¹⁹ According to Tygiel, the Communist Party, “one of the few groups concerned with civil rights issues during the depression years,” was, along with a “a small coterie of young black sportswriters,” one of the two forces that emerged in the late 1930s to arouse public awareness about the injustice of Jim Crow baseball.²⁰

In the wake of Tygiel’s influential book, the activities of the Party and its paper have become a prominent strand in recent writing on the subject.²¹ David Falkner wrote in his controversial Robinson biography that “the *Worker* alone in the white press, had been campaigning for years to integrate professional baseball.”²² The *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, published by Oxford University Press, concludes that Rodney’s “ten year struggle for the integration of major league baseball has been widely noted by sports historians, and considered by many to have been crucial.”²³ Notwithstanding the Robinson’s family own continuing disinclination, as noted above, to make any mention of the Party’s baseball integration campaign, the authorized biography of Robinson by Princeton professor Arnold Rampersad accepted the view that the “most vigorous efforts came from the Communist press, including picketing, petitions and unrelenting pressure for about ten years in the *Daily Worker*, notably from Lester Rodney and Bill Mardo.”²⁴

Such revived claims for the importance of the Communist Party and the *Worker* in the baseball integration effort became a noteworthy feature of activities that took place in the spring of 1997 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Jackie Robinson’s breaking of the color line. A curriculum guide distributed in the New York City public schools by the *New York Times* to mark the occasion featured the *Daily Worker* headline from April 11, 1947, “Robinson on Dodgers!” on its cover.²⁵ At a widely publicized Long Island University conference on “Race, Sports and the American Dream,” in addition to presentations discussing the roles played by Rickey, Baseball Commissioner Happy Chandler and, of course, Robinson himself in those turbulent events, as well as the historical and baseball context in which those events unfolded, Lester Rodney and Bill Mardo appeared as honored guests and featured speakers, and were saluted as “men of conscience” in the well-

received volume of conference papers which was later published.”²⁶ Bill Mardo was particularly outspoken in his claims of credit for the Communist Left and the *Worker*. “Let’s be perfectly frank,” Mardo declared:

Branch Rickey signed Robinson after a long and bitter campaign of social protest: ten years of struggle by key black sportswriters and their papers, ten years of struggle by progressive trade unionists, ten years of struggle by politicians of conscience, ten years of struggle by the Communist Party, and ten years of struggle by the *Daily Worker* Sports Page and its sportswriters.²⁷

Veteran leftist activist and conference panelist Henry Foner would write that the conference was notable for “the recognition of the role that the Left, particularly the sports page of the *Daily Worker*, played in the ending Jim Crow in baseball.”²⁸ Foner remembered the day when the Dodgers promoted Robinson from Montreal and how he “hurried from my teaching post at a high school only blocks from Ebbets Field to be present, and that evening—the night of the first Passover Seder—as the youngest of the four Foner brothers, I asked the traditional question, ‘Why is this night different from all other nights?’ I answered it too: ‘Because tonight, for the first time, there is a Black American baseball player in the big leagues.’”²⁹ It is a fine story, also related in the Ken Burns Baseball television documentary, but the (perhaps disappointing) fact is that the night of the first Passover Seder in 1947 was April 4, one week before Robinson became a Dodger.

I.

Two claims in particular have been made concerning the role of the Communist Party and its newspaper in breaking baseball’s color line. First, that the integration of major league baseball in 1947 is attributable, in significant part, to the activities of the Communist Party and *Daily Worker*. Second, as an April 1997 *New York Times* feature on press coverage of Robinson’s debut season put it, “a reader seeking the best, liveliest coverage of Robinson’s breaking of the modern major league color barrier” would find it in the *Daily Worker*, along with the black press.³⁰ The purpose of this article is to assess the merit of these claims.

Before doing so, it is helpful to place such current evaluations of the importance of the Party’s role in “baseball’s great experiment” in the context of an ongoing debate about the nature of the American Communist movement, which, even a decade after the end of the Cold War, remains “bitterly contested terrain,” as Maurice Isserman wrote while that conflict still raged.³¹ In the 1950s, the first serious students of the Party’s history—notably Irving Howe, Lewis Coser and Theodore Draper—drew on their personal political experiences as well as printed and then-available archival sources to present the Party as the disciplined, “top down” servant of the interests (as defined from time to time) of the Soviet Union.³² Although, Harvey Klehr who carried Draper’s story into the 1930s and John Earl Haynes,³³ among others, have followed this earlier line of interpretation, the dominant recent trend in “Communist Party studies” has defined itself more or less in opposition to Howe, Coser, and Draper. A cohort of younger academics, often veterans of the New Left, has rejected an interpretive model which focused on Soviet domination of the American Party, and has portrayed the Party as an authentic expression of an autonomous and indigenous American radicalism, with a life of its own at the grass roots, and on the shop floor, separate and apart from the Party’s role as an instrument of Soviet grand strategy.³⁴

One notable strand of this “revisionist” approach to the history of the Party has been an effort to look at the Party from the “bottom up” and to recover its *American* roots by examining the daily lives of its rank and file members, the personal as well as the political; to look at, in Paul Lyons’s evocative phrase, “who stopped over at one’s house after dinner to play cards, listen to a ball game, sit on the porch drinking a beer, discussing the news.”³⁵ Lyons’s suggested line of inquiry provoked a sharp retort from Draper. “Some Communists” he wrote in the course of a vigorous rebuttal to his critics, “played cards or listened to a ball game; some did not. That information may be relevant to what we may want to know about such people, if we are sufficiently interested in their private lives; the same information may or may not be particularly relevant to the history of the Party as a apolitical movement, which is how it saw itself.”³⁶ In fact, Lyons did not shed much light on the texture, other than the rather narrowly political, of the daily lives of the Philadelphia Communists he interviewed, let alone demonstrate his methodology’s significance to an assessment of the historical role played by the Party. Even Maurice Isserman, one of Draper’s most prominent critics—and targets—expressed a degree of skepticism about the extent to which such “micro-histories” could provide a reliable guide to understanding the American Communist movement.

It would be a mistake to regard the Communist Party at any point in its history as if it had simply been a collection of autonomous sub-groupings of Jews, Finns, blacks, women, longshoremen, East Bronx tenants and baseball fans, who were free to set their own political agenda without reference to Soviet priorities.³⁷

A close examination of the *Worker’s* coverage of the Robinson story can provide some insight into just *how* Party members may have talked about baseball when they sat out on Paul Lyons’s hypothetical stoop and popped open a beer. But before doing so, it is worthwhile to assess the role that the Party and its press actually played in bringing about the desegregation of baseball.

II.

Granted that the *Worker* did run numerous articles over the years challenging baseball’s color line,³⁸ there is scant persuasive evidence that the Communist Party or the *Worker* played a significant role in the sequence of events that brought Robinson to Flatbush. Three episodes which are often cited as evidence of the importance of the Party and the *Worker’s* involvement in the baseball integration effort are instructive in evaluating such claims.

The first involves one of the few times that the *Worker’s* campaign against Jim Crow baseball unquestionably attracted general attention. In mid-July of 1942, Baseball Commissioner Landis summoned Brooklyn manager Leo Durocher to his office to discuss a comment, attributed to Durocher by the *Worker*, to the effect that Durocher was ready to sign black ballplayers, but that Landis would not permit it. Durocher met with Landis on July 16 and claimed he had been misquoted. Afterwards, Landis issued a statement “that there is no baseball rule—formal, informal, or otherwise—that says a ball player must be white” and that “there is nothing to prevent one player or the full limit of 25 players being colored on any baseball team.” The meeting and statement received headline coverage in

the *Worker*, as well as the black press, and although it was given more cursory notice in mainstream newspapers, these accounts, including the dispatch distributed by the Associated Press, generally noted that the meeting had been provoked by an article in the Communist paper.³⁹

The meeting between Durocher and Landis, and Landis's subsequent statement, has become a staple in the story of baseball integration, but the reality was both more prosaic and less significant than the heated confrontation between manager and commissioner that it has sometimes been made out to be.⁴⁰ It is unclear how or when an article in the *Worker* came to Landis's attention, or why he chose to single out Durocher for a meeting on the issue, but surely it was the allegation that it was *he* who was maintaining the color bar more or less singlehandedly which roused the Judge's ire. But a "thunderstruck" Landis had not imperiously ordered Durocher to fly to Chicago to explain a bombshell blast at Landis that required an immediate response.⁴¹ The statement which apparently led to the meeting had actually appeared several weeks earlier, in a June 25 column by new *Worker* sports editor Nat Low,⁴² in which Durocher was mentioned as one of a number of other baseball men, who had previously stated (in Low's words) that "that they would sign Negro stars in a minute if they had your [Landis's] O.K."⁴³

Landis did not meet with Durocher until July 16, when the Dodgers were in Chicago on a regularly scheduled road trip. Durocher's claim to have been misquoted was understandably treated skeptically at the time, and since.⁴⁴ The Dodger manager was certainly on the defensive, as his Dodgers had just been engaged in a beanball war with the Cubs and it was not a politic moment to pick a fight with the Commissioner. However, Durocher appears to have been telling the truth in disavowing a statement, attributed to him by the *Worker* on June 25, 1942, which singled out Landis as being responsible for maintaining baseball segregation.

Low's column had appeared as the *Worker* ramped up an anti-Jim Crow campaign to accompany the onset of the 1942 baseball season. Historians debate the extent to which the Communist Party sacrificed the cause of black civil rights to the imperatives of all-out support of the war against Germany once the Soviet Union had been invaded on June 22, 1941,⁴⁵ but the challenge to baseball's color line could be pressed without impairing the defense effort. And it was an issue which could help the Party build or preserve support in a community that might otherwise find that the Party was inadequately responding to its long-standing grievances by limiting "its struggle for black civil rights to those areas that it believed benefitted the war effort," as Maurice Isserman has concluded.⁴⁶

The prime target of the *Worker's* campaign that spring was Commissioner Landis, who was singled out as the key bulwark of baseball's color line.⁴⁷ "Can You Talk, Judge Landis?" the *Worker* asked,⁴⁸ as it issued the following challenge: "A million fans sent you their signatures on petitions, big league managers, players, fans, sports writers have asked for the end of Jim Crow in baseball. You haven't said a single word yet. SPEAK UP JUDGE LANDIS!" As Lester Rodney put it on May 23, 1942, shortly before leaving for Army service, "permission [to hire black players] must come primarily from Judge Landis."⁴⁹ Low's June 25 rendition of Durocher's opinion dovetailed neatly with this focus on the Commissioner.

Durocher's comments on the color line had actually been made three years earlier in 1939, as part of a survey of baseball player and manager opinion conducted by Pittsburgh

Courier assistant sports editor Wendell Smith. In the *Courier's* account, published on August 5, 1939, Smith reported that he had interviewed Durocher in Pittsburgh earlier that year on May 25, and that Durocher had then told him that "I've seen plenty of colored boys who could make the grade in the majors;" that, "Hell, I've seen a million," that "the decision is not up to the managers," and that "I cannot say just when they will be admitted, because I do not know how the owners look upon the situation. I CERTAINLY WOULD USE A NEGRO PLAYER IF THE BOSSES SAID IT WAS ALL RIGHT."⁵⁰ The *Worker*, which was cooperating with Smith and the *Courier*,⁵¹ reported Durocher's remarks to Smith on August 6 and 7, 1939.⁵² Durocher did not single out Landis in his quoted comments. If anyone in baseball had been his target, it was the owners.

But, leaving aside the actual circumstances leading up to the meeting, and that it appears that Durocher *had* been misquoted by the *Worker* in June 1942,⁵³ what can be said about the significance of the disavowal of any baseball rule precluding the signing of black players which Landis issued thereafter? At the time, the *Worker* hailed it as a decisive breakthrough, running several days of headlines reading "Landis Ruling on Negro Stars a Great Victory," "City Hails Blow to Baseball Jim Crow," and "Landis's O.K. on Negro Stars is a Great Democratic Victory for All America."⁵⁴ Some reports in the black press took the same line. A headline in the Pittsburgh *Courier* dubbed the statement "Commissioner Landis's Emancipation Proclamation,"⁵⁵ and the Baltimore *Afro-American* reported that "Landis Clears Way for Owners to Hire Colored."⁵⁶ The *Worker* confidently predicted that "we have no doubt, that after the clear, concise statement of Commissioner Landis, the owners of the big league clubs will not hesitate to sign [black stars] up."⁵⁷ Over the next few days, the *Worker* ran repeated stories about black ballplayers who were being promised major league tryouts, and major league clubs which averred that they were actively interested in black ballplayers.⁵⁸

At the same time, some black and white sportswriters were more doubtful about the actual significance of Landis's statement. *Afro-American* sports columnist Art Carter opined that "in my humble opinion, the judge has not said much... what the judge should do... is to urge that some teams hire colored players...As it is now, I think the fight is just where it started—back in Landis's lap."⁵⁹ Harry Keck, white sports editor of the Pittsburgh *Sun-Telegram*, wrote that Judge Landis was asking the public to swallow a "big sugar-coated pill" in saying that there was no rule keeping blacks out of organized baseball, and that the sport was "handing out...malarkey about Negro baseball players being welcome in organized baseball." "If this statement is true," Keck pointedly asked, "why is it that there never has been, in any league in organized baseball a Negro player or a Negro team?"⁶⁰ Fay Young of the *Chicago Defender* labeled Landis's statement "bosh," a "smokescreen for owner bigotry."⁶¹

A survey of several Negro League players by the *Baltimore Afro-American* found most doubtful that any dramatic breakthrough was in the offing. "I'll believe it when I see it—and not until then," said one.⁶² For his part, Dodger President Larry McPhail flatly declared that "any statement that there is no agreement, formal or informal, barring colored players from organized baseball is 100 percent hypocrisy."⁶³ And Durocher, back-pedaling from his earlier endorsement, and perhaps in penance for having, however inadvertently, stirred the pot over the issue, gave at least one interview—unreported by the *Worker*—

after his meeting with Landis, stating that, in recent years, he had seen only one black player of major league caliber, dismissing Satchel Paige, among others, as too old.⁶⁴

The *Worker* ignored McPhail's mordant observation, but it quickly became clear that the skeptics were right. The promised tryouts did not take place. No major league team signed a black ballplayer, or even went through the motions of purporting to do so.⁶⁵ The mainstream press's news judgment in giving the story only brief mention proved justified by what Landis's statement really amounted to—no change in the status quo. Landis was just mouthing ritualistic, meaningless boilerplate. Indeed, his remarks were not much different from National League President Ford Fricks similar denial that team owners were prevented from hiring black ballplayers in a statement that had been reported in the *Worker* as far back as 1936.⁶⁶

In fact, nothing better indicates the limited significance of the July 1942 Landis statement than a second commonly cited instance of the Communist Party's allegedly important role in baseball integration efforts. Party-allied performer (and former All-America football star) Paul Robeson's appeal for dismantling baseball's color bar at a meeting with Commissioner Landis and major league owners in December 1943 is often presented as a one man show,⁶⁷ without recognizing—as the *Worker* itself did at the time—that Robeson was a “last-minute addition” to a delegation of black newspapermen who had already secured the audience, that he was one of four men who addressed the group, and that Robeson himself acknowledged that he was joining a pre-existing movement to integrate baseball.⁶⁸ Echoing its triumphant take on the *previous* year's Landis statement, the *Worker* proclaimed “Major League Paves Way for Negroes” with the “Baseball Campaign in New Stage After Real, Great Victory,” but once again words did not translate into deeds.⁶⁹

A third challenge to the baseball color line that has been attributed to the Communist Party involved an anti-discrimination protest outside Yankee Stadium on the opening day of the 1945 baseball season. Consisting of about twenty pickets carrying signs saying, “If We Can Pay, Why Can't We Play” and “If We Can Stop Bullets Why Not Balls,” some historians have credited the Communist Party with the demonstration.⁷⁰ In fact, the event was organized by a Harlem-based “League for Equality on Sports and Amusements.”⁷¹ Led by James Pemberton, a Tammany Hall Harlem machine politician, and Hubert Fauntleroy Julian, a pioneering black aviator known as the “Black Eagle” and a one-time follower of Marcus Garvey, the League had no apparent connection to the Communist Party.⁷² Although the protest was widely, if briefly, noted in the mainstream and independent left-liberal press, it was ignored by the *Worker*.⁷³ Hailed by the black press as the “first semblance of organized protest against discrimination on major league baseball,”⁷⁴ twenty pickets were, in any event, hardly likely to have much influence on baseball's powers that be, or pressure Rickey into doing anything he did not intend to do on his own, especially as plans for a follow up with 500 demonstrators the next Sunday at the Polo Grounds fizzled.⁷⁵

For its part, the Communist Party did not turn to a public protest strategy until later that season with the formation of an “End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee” at the end of July,⁷⁶ a change of tactics that coincided with the Soviet-orchestrated ouster of the Party's Popular Front and World War II era leader Earl Browder in favor of the more militant William Z. Foster.⁷⁷ The announcement of the Committee's existence appeared, in fact, in

the same issue of the *Worker* which reported Foster's election as Party Chairman,⁷⁸ months after the Yankee Stadium opening day picket line. And the Party's "End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee" was hardly a success. Its planned demonstrations at the Ebbets Field and the Polo Grounds on Saturday August 18 were canceled at the last minute at the request of Mayor LaGuardia, who asked that his newly formed Baseball Anti-Discrimination Committee be given a chance to make progress on its own.⁷⁹ Whether the protests would actually have rallied the massive turnouts that were anticipated (the *Worker* reported that "many unions are mobilizing their entire memberships for the Saturday actions"⁸⁰) seems doubtful. The fall-back anti-discrimination rally in the heart of Harlem that afternoon received no mention in the mainstream media and was apparently so unimpressive as to warrant no more than a picture, unaccompanied by an article, in the *Worker* itself.⁸¹

Finally, in assessing the impact of the Communist Left on the integration of baseball, it is necessary to put the Party's activities in perspective. First, many advocates of baseball integration had no connection to the Party. Claims about the importance of the *Worker's* role in challenging Jim Crow in baseball and the "success of the Communists in forcing the issue before the American public,"⁸² have to be qualified by the fact that the paper had a very limited circulation, estimated at around 20,000-30,000 daily and 50,000-60,000 on Sundays in the mid-1940s.⁸³ Whatever the *Worker* may have said on the subject, and however often, the cause of baseball integration was vigorously taken up by mainstream sportswriters and commentators with far more clout and vastly larger readerships, including Walter Winchell, Ed Sullivan, Damon Runyon, Westbrook Pegler, and Jimmy Powers in New York, Shirley Povich in Washington, Hugh Bradley in Philadelphia, Harvey Keck in Pittsburgh, and Dave Egan in Boston—not to mention the black press.⁸⁴ True, Wendell Smith of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the black sportswriter most active in the desegregation campaign and who had the closest relationship to Robinson, was probably overstating things when he wrote, in August 1947, that "the Communists did more to delay the entrance of Negroes in big league baseball than any other single factor,"⁸⁵ but the fairest verdict is simply that the *Worker* was more or less irrelevant to the process. For that matter, the integration of baseball was a fairly marginal issue for the Communist Party itself, going unmentioned, for example, in the memoirs of former Communist official George Charney, who was the Party's New York leader in the post-war years, and who had earlier been the Party's organizational secretary in Harlem.⁸⁶

Second, by the mid-1940s baseball desegregation was a cause embraced by major party politicians, including incumbent Mayor LaGuardia and Republican Mayoralty candidate Jonah Goldstein in New York and Boston City Councillor Isadore Muchnick,⁸⁷ and even with respect to such pressure from major party politicians—let alone the Communist Party—Rickey's main concern was making sure that they stayed out of his way and not derail his own carefully formulated, pre-existing strategy to integrate the Dodgers.⁸⁸ And the same lack of demonstrable impact on Rickey's signing of Jackie Robinson is true with respect to New York's Ives-Quinn antidiscrimination legislation.⁸⁹

Rickey had begun his preparations to break the color line well before the law's passage in March 1945, and had received the green light to do so from the Brooklyn ball club's fellow directors early in 1943.⁹⁰ Although no doubt a harbinger of an emerging post-war

pro-civil rights political consensus, the law had slight relevance as a practical matter to the integration of New York's baseball clubs, as best illustrated by the fact that the Yankees remained entirely white for a decade after the law's passage, without any intervention by the antidiscrimination commission established by the law.⁹¹ Nor did the fact that Massachusetts enacted similar legislation shortly after New York prevent Boston's Red Sox from being the last major league club to integrate, not doing so until 1959.

It is quite unlikely that the Republican and strongly anti-Communist Rickey paid any heed to what the Party and its press was saying; to the extent he became aware of it, he denounced what he regarded as Communist-inspired agitation harmful to its professed objectives.⁹² If any "outsider" had any significant influence on Rickey's thinking about racial issues in the baseball context, it was Columbia University sociologist Frank Tannenbaum. Rickey read and frequently quoted from Tannenbaum's pioneering comparative study of slavery, *Slave and Citizen*, finding in it support for his own conservative view that racial discrimination was more effectively fought through social processes than legal actions.⁹³

III.

On this record, even Mark Naison's measured conclusion that "though integration of the sport would eventually have come without Communist activity, the Party's agitation probably accelerated the process"⁹⁴ appears to be something of an overstatement. Yet whatever the merits of the contention that the CP or its newspaper played a significant role in the shattering of baseball's color line, attention to the *Worker's* sports pages opens up a useful vantage point on the dispute over the nature of the American Communist Party itself. Based on the perspective that *their* paper brought to bear on this sports story, a "bottom up" effort to get a feel for the daily life of the Party's members tends to validate a "top down" conclusion: whether the subject was international affairs or the baseball business, the discussion was carried out within a rigid doctrinal framework in which any and all aspects of experience were viewed through a similar ideological lens. To again quote Professor Naison, his assessment that "the *Daily Worker* sports page represented an amalgam of previously antagonistic themes, combining 'apolitical' coverage of baseball, basketball and boxing... with stories on trade union and left-organized sports programs" slights this dimension to the paper's coverage of a story, such as the integration of baseball, which combined these two themes.⁹⁵ The result, in the Robinson case, was that anyone—then or now—looking to the Communist press for a reliable account of Robinson's historic first season would be disappointed.

The Communist paper's sports staff approached the breaking of baseball's color line with the belief that class, not race, provided the determinative fault line on American social life, and that racism was instigated by the bosses to foment division between white and black workers, including baseball's working class: the players. The result was that, contrary to what was being reported in the mainstream press—often to the *Worker's* dismissive scorn—or the black press, and what subsequent histories and memoirs confirm, the *Worker* consistently downplayed the racism that Robinson faced, and the loneliness and difficulty of the struggle he waged for acceptance and respect. The judgment of one of Paul Lyons's Philadelphia ex-Communist interviewees that the *Worker* was "written for a

bunch of morons”⁹⁶ puts things harshly, but it is certainly fair to say that the way in which the *Worker* approached the Robinson story minimized the true dimension of his courageous achievement.

By the spring of 1947, the *Daily Worker's* sports coverage had a not uncomplicated history behind it, including a far-from-clear-cut record on its oft-claimed (then and now) signature issue: the assault on segregation in profession sports, particularly baseball.⁹⁷ The *Daily Worker* had introduced a regular sports section in the fall of 1936, the heyday of the Popular Front. Previously, the paper had been suspicious of sport as a distraction from the class struggle, warning in the spring of 1929 “amid headlines calling for further demonstrations and still greater Bolshevization of the party,” that “baseball is a weapon against the workers.”⁹⁸ Having reconciled itself to the proposition that sports coverage might further its appeal to a working class that stubbornly remained interested in such “diversions,” the *Worker's* sportswriters were, from time to time, nevertheless forced to justify the paper’s attention to such capitalist goings on. As Lester Rodney, sports editor from 1936 until 1957, wrote, responding to a reader who had asked why the *Worker* was covering such a blatantly discriminatory institution as major league baseball:

We cover the big league teams and at the same time lead the fight to end the discrimination of the magnates against Negro players. Baseball is a great mass sport, loved and followed by millions, and except for a tiny minority, the players themselves are working class Americans who would welcome the Negro players in. No sports are perfect under capitalism, where the profit motive is incompatible with real sportsmanship. But is the way to fight for a better sports world to withdraw ourselves from it until it is perfect? Of course not... We love baseball and that’s why we aim to see the day when it is truly our National Pastime.⁹⁹

That even on this rather peripheral issue, the paper remained captive to the contingent ideological imperatives of the moment, was illustrated after the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939. The paper’s introduction of expanded sports coverage had been, Mark Naison has written, a manifestation of the Party’s efforts during the Popular Front era to reach beyond “the immigrant milieu in which most of its activities had been confined and make it acceptable to the population at large.”¹⁰⁰ The renewed sectarianism initiated by the Pact, and the end of the Popular Front, triggered a retreat from the coalition-building causes which the *Worker's* sports pages had previously embraced. The paper, which was then in the midst of an aggressive campaign against the segregated game, all but dropped the subject for the remainder of the baseball season. “The confusion over the direction which Communist opinion was to take in light of the... Pact was obvious through this virtual silence,” according to Kelly Rusinack’s review of the paper’s sports coverage in this period.¹⁰¹ Nor, Rusinack writes, were the cudgels picked up with anything like the former fervor for the duration of the Pact, as ‘the *Worker* laid low regarding comparative criticisms between Nazi Germany and U.S. Jim Crow during the August 1939 to June 1941 period.’ Although grass roots activities picked up after a while, they were relatively muted, and the previously prominent attacks on baseball officials and owners were shelved. “The difference,” Rusinack concludes, “was startling—the relative quietness with which the campaign was administered was in stark contrast to the forcefulness it had taken on in previous years.”¹⁰²

During the period of the Pact, the baseball integration issue, when resuscitated at all, was tied in to the Party's overriding activity: its anti-war campaign. The *Worker's* sports staff enlisted in the "Yanks are not coming" crusade, with Lester Rodney writing on one occasion, "So what with the Roosevelt-Hoover-Wall Street pull to get us into war, this year's slogan for sports fans could well be, "'The Yanks Are Not Coming!' and 'The Other Teams are Coming After the Yanks with Those Great Negro Stars.'" When ticket sales were reportedly slow for an All-Star baseball game for a Finnish relief fund, during the Soviets' winter war with that country, Rodney gloated that "the American sports world has smelt the rat behind Hoover's 'sports for Finland' campaign and decided to keep away from it." In making New Year's resolutions for 1941, which included one to continue the fight against Jim Crow in baseball, Rodney's top priority remained to "fight with all our energy the gathering movement to tie the sports world to the F.D.R. war wagon" As to the "campaign to end discrimination in baseball", Rodney took care to note that "Churchill, Halifax and the Bank of London... can give our baseball magnates a few pointers in pushing people around—en masse."¹⁰³

Given this unsurprising record of fealty to the Party's general political line, when baseball's color barrier was finally broken, one could anticipate that the *Worker* would view "baseball's great experiment" through an ideologically "correct" prism. A harbinger of what to expect could be found in one of the paper's favored themes from the Popular Front Era, when the paper addressed the reasons for the exclusion of blacks from organized baseball. The *Worker* then justified the campaign for the desegregation of baseball as "a service to the Negro people and all oppressed nationalities—the primary aim—but also to baseball itself." Only the "bosses" stood in the way of the desires of the players and the fans—by failing indeed to recognize their own self-interest:

To save baseball, those teams other than the first division clubs, have to be drastically strengthened.

The managers and players of the big leagues have acknowledged this fact: The obstacle in the way is the owners. They must be made to realize by fans that they will no longer tolerate discrimination and that they insist on strengthening weaker clubs by the bringing in of those outstanding Negro stars who can contribute toward making the pennant race in the majors a real race.¹⁰⁴

This ideologically driven perspective, holding that Robinson would be welcomed by his fellow players, whether teammates or opponents, would provide the dominant thread to the *Worker's* coverage of Robinson's entry into the big leagues—and which accounted, more than anything else, for the paper's nearly complete failure to provide an adequate account of that wrenching experience. For the fact, however ideologically inconvenient, was that Robinson encountered cold indifference at best—and actively racist hostility at worst—in his first weeks as a major leaguer, with his fellow players showing little inclination to fill the progressive role which the *Worker* had summoned them to play. The result was a *Worker* sports page which consistently downplayed the resistance that Robinson was up against, and which directed fierce invective toward those observers in the mainstream press who did report the obstacles in Robinson's path.

IV.

Resentment and opposition from fellow ballplayers might, of course, have well been expected, and not for narrowly racist reasons alone. In 1947, the sixteen clubs in the Major Leagues stood at the thin apex of a massive pyramid of talent in organized baseball—all of it white. For every one of the 400 (white) men on major league rosters, there were 25 potential replacements on the almost 500 minor league teams then competing in five dozen leagues, a total of about 10,000 minor leaguers, white to the last man.¹⁰⁵ An influx of talent from any new source posed a direct threat to the aspirations, not to mention the livelihood, of these thousands at a time when almost everyone in the professional baseball world entered it after high school graduation, at most, and the likely alternative to a career in baseball for many was the mine, the mill, the farm, or the filling station. This was a ready-made formula for hostility. After all, during the recent war, the entry of blacks into jobs previously reserved for whites had unleashed hate strikes and other protests from embittered and resentful white war workers, not only in Alabama shipyards or Baltimore defense plants, but in Detroit auto factories, and the Philadelphia transit system, conflicts which even the overriding exigencies of wartime had been unable to prevent.¹⁰⁶ There was no reason to believe that the tightly knit, segregated world of organized baseball would be any different. As Negro League star Buck O'Neill noted, "for Jackie to play in the major leagues, that meant that one white boy wasn't going to play."¹⁰⁷ And it was, also a meaner, rougher time in general than we have become accustomed to, a time when a teammate responded to disabled outfielder Pete Gray's request for help in lacing up his cleats by snarling, "tie your own goddamned shoes, you one-armed son of a bitch."¹⁰⁸

The first test that Robinson faced that spring came from his teammates. And resentment and opposition there certainly was. A core of southern veterans, including the Brooklyn fan favorite Dixie Walker, the "People's Choice," augmented by Pennsylvanian Carl Furillo, attempted to orchestrate a player revolt against Robinson, which was stamped out only by an immediate crackdown by Rickey and Dodger manager Leo Durocher.¹⁰⁹ That Robinson's own teammates, the players who would most directly benefit from having his skills in the lineup, might resent his presence was a breach of class solidarity that the *Worker* was loath to admit. On March 16, Lester Rodney attacked *World-Telegram* columnist Dan Daniel, who had not only discounted Robinson's chances of breaking into the Dodger line-up, but had written that "Jackie would not be treated with uniform cordiality and unalloyed enthusiasm by all Southern ballplayers of the National League" and that even some Brooklyn players were "having reservations" about playing with Robinson.¹¹⁰ "What's it all about and what's behind such a column," Rodney asked, and his answer was clear:

It's a carefully fabricated dope story without any facts, written by an influential writer and designed to create an atmosphere unfavorable to the ending of Jim Crow in the big leagues. Daniel is looking for trouble for Jackie when he says he believes "Robinson would run into trouble." He knows well that there are as many or more Southern ballplayers in the International League as the National, and that far from being any trouble, Jackie was one of the most popular men in the circuit.... Daniel's predictions are phony.¹¹¹

Next to rouse Rodney's ire was Roscoe McGowen of the *New York Times* who, Rodney wrote, "seems to have constituted himself a committee of one to [the] end" of discouraging Robinson's promotion to the Dodgers.¹¹² "Breathing a thin nosed, blue-blooded dislike of the whole matter," McGowen had, Rodney charged, interpreted one of Rickey's typically Delphic utterances, that "time will be an ally," to mean that Robinson would play another year in Montreal. McGowen had compounded the offence by writing that "none of the Dodgers want Robinson."¹¹³ Rodney responded some ten days after McGowen's March 16 report:

The remarkable Times statement claiming 36 players on the Dodger roster [are opposed to Robinson] is so palpably a wish that it need hardly be disproved. Just for the same record, however, I might state that I chatted with several of the Dodger players before the team's departure for the South and they said in plain English t-hey would be happy to have Robinson on the team if he was a good enough ballplayer to help. Whatever that makes the "Times" man, so be it.

There seems little doubt that there are some few of the players who may still harbor inbred prejudices that outweigh simple sportsmanship, not to mention Americanism.... However, it takes stories like McGowen's to remind enemies of discrimination that nothing can be taken for granted. This certainly is the moment to not only back up Rickey, but put more and more heat on Stoneham, McPhail and the other magnates who have yet made no move to sign qualified Negro players.¹¹⁴

McGowen was with the Dodger team, which was training in Panama, Rodney was in New York. McGowen's assessment was, in fact, closer to the sad reality of the situation. Rickey had hoped that once the Dodger players had seen Robinson in action, they would demand his promotion to the club. But, Jules Tygiel writes, "all of the Mahatma's machinations dissolved in the hot Caribbean sun. There would be no easy path to the major leagues for Jackie Robinson."¹¹⁵ While Rodney was identifying and condemning McGowen's "blue-blooded dislike," *The Sporting News* was reporting that Branch Rickey's hope that the Dodger players would more or less demand Robinson's promotion to the club had not materialized, and indeed that concerns about team morale were such that "the only thing keeping Robinson off the Dodgers now, plainly, is the attitude of the players."¹¹⁶ True, the St. Louis-based "baseball bible" was an outspoken opponent of baseball integration,¹¹⁷ but this bleak assessment is accepted by the Robinson family's authorized biographer, and finds support in Jules Tygiel's account as well.¹¹⁸ Robinson for his part "noted the chill and resented it."¹¹⁹

When, by April 3, still writing from New York, and after the Dodgers had shifted their training site to Havana, Rodney was finally ready to acknowledge that there was indeed some anti-Robinson sentiment among the Dodger players, he labored to fit that inconvenient fact into an ideologically orthodox perspective:

Someone down Havana just dropped us a note mentioning [the] names of those players on the Brooklyn Dodgers who are acting nasty about the strong probability of Jackie Robinson coming up to the team. The three named are Kirby Higbe, Carl Furillo and Dick Whitman.

Higbe, a look at the Dodger roster reveals, is from South Carolina, but the other two are from Pennsylvania and Oregon respectively. *With the thought that combat veterans usually returned with less prejudices than they started out with, I tried to check on the service records of these players... The National League service Bureau informed me that Higbe was in the Army and was stationed in Hawaii, The records of Furillo and Whitman, both vets, were not available as they were Montreal property last spring.*¹²⁰

Any hope that the prejudices of Furillo and Whitman could, like Higbe's, be attributed to a lack of combat duty, was, however, immediately frustrated with Rodney's follow up report that "into the office today came a veteran of the 77th Division. . . to say that Furillo went through some of the Pacific campaigns with the division." Rodney quoted the combat vet, who was evidently also a veteran reader of the *Daily Worker*, as saying that, "I didn't know Furillo personally but I'm surprised to hear of a young working class guy like that from Pennsylvania being that way."¹²¹

But the grudging recognition that there might indeed be a few cases of inexplicable antagonism toward Robinson on the Dodger team did not spare those observers who noted such tensions after the regular season had started. In his New York *Mirror* column on April 21, Ed Sullivan had written that "Brooklyn Dodger dugout and clubhouse treatment of Jackie Robinson was making it tougher for the kid (even when he belted his homer, his teammates ignored him, the jerks.)" Sullivan's obvious sympathy for Robinson earned him the heavily ironic label "Great Sympathetic Progressive" from Bill Mardo, who lambasted Sullivan for spreading harmful "gossipy nonsense:"

Sullivan should've checked his source of information from purely a journalistic point of view—and if he's truly concerned about Jackie Robinson he wouldn't print harmful trash like that. For one thing I don't recall seeing Sullivan in the press box the afternoon Jackie hit the circuit—but Robby did get the congratulations of his teammates when he got back to the dugout. Secondly, about the alleged "treatment" Jackie is getting. Most of his Dodger teammates are all for him. Go out to the ballpark when the Brooks are home Mr. Sullivan, and you'll note the friendly by-play between Jackie and Ed Stanky, for example. Or if you get to the field early, you might see Southerner Hugh Casey giving Jackie some tips about the first base job. Petey Reiser has publicly rooted for Jackie... and so on, right down the line.

.... Let's have the facts, Sullivan, and not the gossipy nonsense that harms Jackie and slanders the majority of his teammates.¹²²

A few days later, a *Worker* reader took issue with Mardo, and, albeit reluctantly, backed up Sullivan's account, and argued that "we are doing Robbie a disservice if we over-emphasize the cooperation he is getting or the encouragement he is receiving from his teammates,"¹²³ Mardo responded by reiterating his conviction that all was well between Robinson and his teammates:

By now it's no secret that the vast majority of the Dodgers are all for Robbie and this is apparent not by any obvious gushiness, but by the completely normal manner in which one ballplayer shows respect and friendliness for another.. When a prominent Broadway columnist distorts these simple facts and places the emphasis all the other way it's our job to call him on it.¹²⁴

In fact, the *Worker* sports staff knew better. Fifty years later, Rodney would acknowledge that “there were no signs of casual, intimate teammate relationships between the rookie and his fellow Dodgers” when the season opened.¹²⁵ And even more strikingly, Rodney would also admit that he went easy on Dodger teammate Furillo’s mutterings that “I ain’t going to play with no niggers,” because it would have been embarrassing to Communists to acknowledge that a ballplayer with a working-class background could express such prejudices.¹²⁶

V.

If the *Worker* missed, and indeed suppressed, the full story of Robinson’s rocky time in his own clubhouse, so too did it drop the ball on the second front in the battle against the color line—that waged against Robinson by opposing players. However cool relations may have been with his teammates, the Dodgers’ first series with the Philadelphia Phillies exposed Robinson to the full force of unbridled, venomous racism. In three games at Ebbets Field between April 22 and 24, the Phillies dugout, led by manager Ben Chapman, let fly with a torrent of racial abuse that Robinson could still vividly recall decades later.¹²⁷

Unswayed by the Alabama-born Chapman’s defense that this was nothing more than traditional bench jockeying, the Phillies’ onslaught met with widespread criticism. Walter Winchell denounced Chapman on his Sunday night radio program. Dan Parker, sports editor of the *Daily Mirror* decried the Phillies’ “guttersnipe language” and praised Robinson as the “only gentleman among those involved in the incident.” The black press, which was the first to go public with the story, gave the story prominent and unvarnished play.¹²⁸ As for the *Worker*, nothing appeared on the incident until after it had been the subject of outraged comment elsewhere. During the Philadelphia series itself, the *Worker* had printed nothing on the abusive conduct, providing instead routine boilerplate about trade rumors, other potential black big leaguers, and praise for Robinson from one Phillies player.¹²⁹ Even after the story broke elsewhere—the black press leading the way—with its disturbing evidence that opposition to baseball integration was not confined to its executive suite, the *Worker* gave it passing and perfunctory attention.¹³⁰ As the story escalated, and the black press featured banner headlines about Baseball Commissioner Chandler’s warning to Chapman and the Phillies to “Stop Race Baiting” the *Worker* continued its low-key treatment, not mentioning Chandler’s action, and ignoring the obviously staged “reconciliation” photo-op that Chapman was compelled to go through with Robinson before the Dodgers first game in Philadelphia two weeks later.¹³¹ Robinson would recall that April 22, 1947, the day the ordeal with the Phillies began, “of all the unpleasant days in my life, brought me nearer to cracking up than I ever had been.”¹³² The *Worker* was definitely not the place to learn very much at all about the most traumatic experience of Robinson’s debut year.

The series with the Phillies proved only the prelude to what historian Jules Tygiel has described as “three weeks [which] thrust Robinson, his family, his teammates, and baseball into a period of unrelenting crisis and tension,”¹³³ but the *Worker* remained more or less mute on Robinson’s grim ordeal. On the heels of the Phillies’ savage “bench jockeying,” Robinson was facing a flood of hate mail, death threats, and a thwarted plot by the St. Louis Cardinals to go on strike rather than play against Robinson—orchestrated, accord-

ing to the Baltimore *Afro-American*, by a Dodger teammate.¹³⁴ May 9, 1947, the day the Cardinal strike threat was reported, Tygiel writes, “marked perhaps the worst day of Jackie Robinson’s baseball life. Threats on his life, torment from opposing players, discrimination at the team hotel, and rumors of a player strike simultaneously engulfed the black athlete.”¹³⁵

The next day, legendary sports columnist Jimmy Cannon of the *New York Post* denounced the “venomous conspiracy” of a “great lynch mob” that

is trying to run Jackie Robinson out of organized baseball. It does not go for all ball players and not even all the St. Louis Cards, some of whom are accused of trying to range a strike to protest against the presence of a Negro in the big leagues. But such a state exists and we should all be shamed of it, not only those connected with the sport, but any one who considers this his country.¹³⁶

Cannon painted a memorably bleak picture of Robinson’s isolation amidst the storm:

...in the clubhouse Robinson is a stranger. The Dodgers are polite and courteous with him but it is obvious he is isolated by those with whom he plays. I have never heard remarks made against him or detected any rudeness where he is concerned... But the silence is loud and Robinson never is part of the jovial and aimless banter of the locker room. He is the Loneliest man I have ever seen in sports.¹³⁷

This was not what the *Worker* was telling its readers. Instead, Rodney and Mardo downplayed (when not entirely ignoring) the hostility Robinson was facing, painting an upbeat picture of Robinson’s reception on the playing field and in the dugout. Although Ben Chapman’s verbal abuse could not be ignored altogether, Lester Rodney assured his readers that “this same Philly clique, again encouraged openly by manager Chapman, has the disgrace of making its team the only one in the circuit to shout K.K.K. abuse at Jackie Robinson.”¹³⁸ In its coverage of reports that Cardinal players had threatened to strike rather than take the field against Robinson, the *Worker* gave more space to Cardinal denials of any such plan than to the strike threat itself, and stuck to *its* preferred storyline:

During the entire home-stand of the Dodgers at Ebbets Field, witnessed daily by this writer [Mardo] there has never been any open incidents of any kind—or anything visibly suggesting an anti-Robinson attitude on the part of some visiting ballplayers. Aside from Chapman’s foul language, Robinson has been treated like any other ballplayer, both by his own teammates, who are almost unanimously behind him, and by the opposition.¹³⁹

Revisiting a familiar theme, Rodney drew a contrast between the alleged acceptance of Robinson by the mass of players, teammates and opponents alike, as well as fans at home and on the road, and the real racists—the baseball owners, and their mouthpieces in the press, particularly the *Sporting News*. Rodney acknowledged “some ‘trouble’ around Robinson” but made it clear that drawing attention to such incidents was a smokescreen for continued opposition to the integration of the game, and singled out Jimmy Cannon’s bleak portrayal for particular disparagement:

Those who don’t want to see baseball break down the rest of the rotten Jimcrow barriers make a big to-do about any incidents involving Jackie. They have to because they’re worried about the way fans are turning out in unprecedented

numbers all over the circuit to see the Dodgers.... Some of the well-meaning columnists fall in with that stuff by eloquently exaggerating the threats to Jackie, his “lonely” figure on the bench, et. al., and completely neglecting to mention the fact of normal acceptance from most players as well as fans...¹⁴⁰

Rodney’s advice to his readers was familiar, a reminder of the identity of the real enemy:

Don’t let the overplayed ‘trouble’ stories throw you. If you believe in democracy get after the 15 big league magnates who haven’t opened the gates yet. That’s the big angle.¹⁴¹

Rodney was taking his eye off the ball. Whatever the other “15 big league magnates” might do or not do in the future was heavily dependent on how Robinson performed in that first season. It was precisely the “trouble” that Rodney urged his readers to ignore that would determine the outcome of Robinson’s pioneering efforts—and also constituted the central drama of the Robinson story, providing the truest measure of his historic achievement. Over the course of the season Robinson would go on to win the acceptance of his teammates, secure the respect of his opponents, win Rookie of the Year honors, and appear in the World Series. But openly expressed racial hostility persisted, coming, for example, the next year from opposing dugouts when Kentuckian Pee Wee Reese was razzed about having Robinson—who was switched to second base that season—as a double play partner.¹⁴² Baseball historian John Thorn has said, with awe palpable in his voice, at the measure of Robinson’s courage and perseverance, that “I can think of no man having a more difficult road ahead of him than Jackie Robinson did in 1947.”¹⁴³ It was Robinson’s ability to triumph over long and intimidating odds, and to succeed in a markedly unwelcoming environment, that was *the* “big angle” of that memorable year, and it was a story that the *Worker* had missed.

VI.

There is an epilogue to the story of the *Daily Worker’s* coverage of Jackie Robinson’s rookie year, one which sheds additional light on the way the paper—and the Party—looked at the world of sport. On July 18, 1949, Jackie Robinson made a highly publicized appearance before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. *This* was a story involving Robinson that the *Worker* would not, and did not, miss.

On that day, mid-way through the greatest season of his career, and a week after he, along with teammates Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella, along with Cleveland’s Larry Doby, had broken the All Star Game color line, Robinson flew down to Washington, D.C. to testify before HUAC, in response to an invitation from committee Chairman John Wood of Georgia. Although Robinson devoted much of his testimony to criticizing the continuing racial injustices of American society, the highlight of his appearance—and reason for the Committee’s invitation—was his forcefully stated testimony that Paul Robeson did not speak for American blacks when he had been quoted as saying that American blacks would not take up arms on behalf of the United States against the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁴

Even before Robinson testified, the *Worker* sports staff mobilized. Lester Rodney warned Robinson that he was being faced with a “trick question” when asked whether blacks would defend the United States against the Soviet Union because “nobody threatens our country, least of all the Soviet Union, land of socialism, which by its very makeup is

incapable of aggression.”¹⁴⁵ After Robinson’s appearance in Washington, in which he carefully testified that Robeson’s reported statement “if he actually made it, sounds very silly to me” and averred that most blacks would “do their best to help their country win the war—against Russia or any other enemy that threatened us,” the immediate response in the *Worker* was predictable. Under the headline, “Jackie Robinson Aids Un-Americans with Redbaiting,” the paper reported that “Robinson aids hysteria:”

Jackie Robinson showed up today before that leading instrument for promotion of fascism in America and gave it pretty much what it wanted.... Robinson slandered the Communists in typical redbaiting fashion though it was they who had fought almost singlehandedly to break down Jimcrow barriers in big league baseball for a decade before Robinson was signed by the Dodgers in 1945.¹⁴⁶

Bill Mardo weighed in with an attack on Robinson’s ingratitude to Paul Robeson, who “personally paved the way for Robinson’s entry into organized baseball.” Mardo’s damning conclusion: “Jackie Robinson’s memory is short indeed.”¹⁴⁷ Two days later the *Worker’s* lead editorial asserted that

Jackie Robinson fell into a trap of defilement.... The Committee... ate up his slanders against Robeson, the peace movement and the Communist Party which has earned their hatred for its unceasing battles against their ‘white supremacy’ vileness... The net effect of Robinson’s playing ball with the Ku Kluxers of the Un-American Committee was to help them against his own people and his country.¹⁴⁸

Reviewing the Rosenbergs’ “Death House Letters” some years later, Robert Warshow noted the contingency of the enthusiasm expressed by the imprisoned couple for the conducting of Toscanini, the racially integrated Dodgers, the motion picture *Gentleman’s Agreement*. “We know how easily,” Warshow would write in 1953, “these responses could have been changed: if ‘Old Man Tosc’ had slighted Paul Robeson, if the Dodgers had fired one of their Negro players, if *Gentleman’s Agreement* had been unfavorably reviewed in the *National Guardian*.”¹⁴⁹ For Robinson, that reckoning had indeed come. After July 18, 1949, the *Worker’s* view of Robinson would never be the same.

Robinson could not be entirely obliterated from the pages of even the most politically engaged New York-based paper which contained a sports section, and Robinson’s support for Robeson after the Peekskill concert riot later that summer won favor with the *Worker*,¹⁵⁰ but Robinson would never regain the unique place he had previously occupied in the *Worker’s* pantheon of sports heroes. The paper never let go of the HUAC incident, most notably when the movie *The Jackie Robinson Story* came out in the spring of 1950. The movie, in which Robinson, somewhat awkwardly but charmingly, played himself, concluded with a scene based on Robinson’s congressional testimony, but which made no reference to HUAC or to Robeson. According to the *Worker’s* movie critic, the film

tried to rob progressives, Negro and white, of the history of their struggle against Jimcrow, to use Jackie Robinson against the unity that won him his place in baseball, and to report this story, with a brave air, yet all the while not only distorting it but lagging behind the real struggles against Jimcrow.

The movie, the *Worker* review concluded, “is not only misleading but dangerous.”¹⁵¹

Specifics aside, one senses a decided change in the way the paper treated Robinson after his congressional testimony, a noticeable downgrading of his previously unquestioned stature as a pioneering figure and great ballplayer. In the final week of the 1949 season, with Robinson spearheading the Dodger pennant drive in a tight race against the Cardinals and about to win the National League batting title, Lester Rodney weighed in with a notably dispassionate discussion of the claims of the Cardinals' Enos Slaughter (especially remarkable in view of Slaughter's notorious intentional spiking of Robinson in 1947)¹⁵² and Stan Musial, as well as Robinson, for Most Valuable Player honors, concluding with an agnostic, "Robinson, Musial or Slaughter. Who do you favor?"¹⁵³ Whatever its merits as a piece of baseball analysis, and Slaughter was having a great season, this was certainly a sharp contrast with the *Worker's* wholehearted cheerleading for Robinson as Rookie of the Year in 1947—not to mention *Look* magazine's hailing Robinson as its "Ballplayer of the Year" in September, or Jimmy Cannon's mid-August tribute to Robinson: "You must admit that this is the Most Valuable Player in the National League."¹⁵⁴

It was a remarkably restrained response to Robinson's greatest season, and when Robinson did win the National League MVP award, the *Worker* handled it with no more than a perfunctory report.¹⁵⁵ In pointed contrast, the paper devoted a full-length story to the selection of Ted Williams as that year's Most Valuable Player in the American League.¹⁵⁶

Pre-World Series mentions of Robinson were scarce that year, and when the Series opened in a repeat of the 1947 contest between the Dodgers and the Yankees, Mardo (although picking the Dodgers as "an affair of the heart") suddenly discovered a new-found

alien and corrupting affection for the enemy: these are not the old bored brand of yesteryear Yankees with their mechanical perfection... The club Casey Stengel has just led to a pennant is as patchwork and limping and injury-riddled an aggregation of oldtimers and raw newcomers as ever you'd care to see.¹⁵⁷

That the Yankees remained an all white team, escaped, for once, censure, or even mention.

The Dodgers were still identified by the fans in all cities as the first team to end of Jim Crow in baseball, Rodney would write in a post-season summing up, but his salute to the Dodgers for having "earned... the enmity of those who don't like democracy in practice.. all of which indicates a deep if not always apparent truth, that no large aspect of our national life, even though it be sports, is really apart from the world around it" avoided any mention of Robinson personally.¹⁵⁸ And surprisingly ready to rush Robinson off the Brooklyn stage, Rodney would write, just after the Series ended, that although "the rumor of Jackie Robinson going to the Braves for a quarter million might have been just a rumor, don't be surprised if something like that did happen."¹⁵⁹ True, Rodney cautioned, the Dodgers might not be quite ready to get rid of Robinson, who coming off his greatest season, might yet be "one year away" from his "point of declining talent."¹⁶⁰

Robinson would stay on with the Dodgers, but the new-found affection for the resolutely Jim Crow Yankees was indeed a straw in the wind. By 1951, with Robinson still starring with the Dodgers, Lester Rodney (who in 1997 would lament "How could you, Bobby Thomson?" and who, his colleague Nat Low had written a few years earlier, had "one failing as a writer"—"his utter partisanship for the Brooklyn Dodgers"¹⁶¹), would be hailing the archrival Giants as the "best team in baseball," a "really formidable outfit" who

had to be given the edge over Robinson's Dodgers in their epic playoff.¹⁶² These all may have been sound, or at the least arguable baseball judgments, but it is hard not to suspect that, for Rodney and the *Worker*, Robinson's confrontation with Robeson on July 18, 1949 had cast an enduring shadow.

VII.

Within a few years, Jackie Robinson was out of baseball, the Brooklyn Dodgers were headed to Los Angeles, Lester Rodney had left the Communist Party, and the *Daily Worker* had ceased publication.¹⁶³ Any attention that might be paid to the role of the Communist Party and its press in the integration of baseball would lie fallow for a quarter century. That would change, largely as a result of the publication of Jules Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment* in 1983. Tygiel's widely used book both placed the Jackie Robinson story in the broader context of the overall struggle to integrate major league baseball and argued that the Communist Party, and particularly the *Daily Worker*, had "played a major role in elevating the issues of baseball's racial policies to the level of public consciousness."¹⁶⁴ The activities of the Party and its paper have become a notable strand in much of the subsequent writing on the breaking of the sport's color line.

The evidence does not, however, sustain the claims of those who argue that the Communist Party or the *Worker* played a significant role in that process. Whatever outside pressure there was for baseball integration came from political and social forces with far greater clout than the Communist Party. Evidence that Branch Rickey was driven even by such mainstream influences is slim. The simple fact appears to be that the breakthrough came about through the singular initiative of Branch Rickey and the outstanding courage of Jackie Robinson, at a time when no one was else was prepared to do what they did, much as the traditional story would have it.

Nor can the *Worker* be accorded the credit that has been claimed for "telling it like it was" when the color line did fall in that memorable spring of 1947. Anxious to relate the Robinson story to the overall "class perspective" that informed its world view generally, the paper failed to present an accurate record of the ordeal that Robinson endured, whether from teammates or opponents, remaining true, instead, to its long-standing conviction that it was baseball's owners, not its players, who stood in the way of baseball integration.

Certainly the *Worker* had placed itself on the right side of the issue that more than anything else compromised the game's pretensions to be the national pastime. But the paper and the Party's actual contribution to the overcoming of the sport's racial barrier was slight at best, and the *Worker's* challenge to the color line was consistently driven by ideology, at the expense of accuracy. One of the *Worker's* early sports columnists once wrote that, if the paper reported "professional sports in the same fashion as the capitalist press," this would be tantamount to "accept[ing] the theory that sports are 'neutral,' 'above classes.'"¹⁶⁵ Whatever doubts there may be about the Party's and its paper's success in actually influencing the course of "baseball's great experiment," there can be none that, in its coverage of Jackie Robinson, the *Daily Worker* did succeed in avoiding that self-defined trap.

1. See Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 36-37; Arnold Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 120; David Falkner, *Great Time Coming: The Life of Jackie Robinson from Baseball to Birmingham* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 68, 95-100; Peter Duffy, "Red Rodney: The American Communist Who Helped Liberate Baseball," *Village Voice*, 10 Jun. 1997; Mary Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, 2d. Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 175-76; Harvey A. Levenstein, "The Worker, Daily Worker" in Joseph R. Conlin, ed., *The American Radical Press 1880-1960* (Westport, CT Greenwood Press, 1974), 232-33; Mark Naison, "Sports for the Daily Worker; An Interview with Lester Rodney," In *These Times*, 12-18 Oct. 1977; Mark Naison, "Lefties and Righties: The Communist Party and Sports during the Great Depression," in *Radical America* 13(4): 47-59 (Jul.-Aug. 1979), reprinted in Donald Spivey, ed., *Sport in America: New Historical Perspectives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 129-40; Joseph Dorinson and Joram Warmund, eds., *Jackie Robinson: Race Sports and the American Dream* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998), 73-106.
2. On weekdays and Saturdays, the paper was called the *Daily Worker*. The Sunday edition was called the *Worker*. The paper will be referred to herein as either the *Daily Worker* or the *Worker*, without distinguishing between the daily and Sunday editions.
3. *Daily Worker*, 11 Apr. 1947.
4. *Daily Worker*, 13 Apr. 1947.
5. *Daily Worker*, 12 Apr. 1947.
6. *Daily Worker*, 17 Aug. 1947.
7. Arthur Mann's accounts include *The Jackie Robinson Story* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950), *Branch Rickey: American in Action* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), "The Truth about the Jackie Robinson Case," *Saturday Evening Post*, 13 May 1950, 19-21, 118-23, and 20 May 1950, 36, 149-54. Robinson's own story is found in Jackie Robinson (as told to Wendell Smith), *Jackie Robinson: My Own Story* (New York: Greenberg Publisher, 1948); Carl T. Rowan, with Jackie Robinson, *Wait Till Next Year* (New York: Random House, 1960); Charles Dexter, ed., *Baseball Has Done It* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1964); and Jackie Robinson as told to Alfred Duckert, *I Never Had It Made* (New York: Putnam, 1972). Rickey contributed the forward to the Robinson-Smith 1948 book.
8. Robinson and Smith, *Jackie Robinson: My Own Story*, 114-26. In addition, see the books last (unnumbered) page, entitled "Salute." Smith's exclusion of the *Worker* cannot simply be ascribed to Cold War-induced concern in 1948 about associating the baseball integration cause with the Communist Party. Smith's similar listing in 1942 of "sportswriters, Negro and white [who] have kept the flame burning" also omitted Rodney or anyone else from the *Worker*. Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 Jul. 1942.
9. Rachel Robinson with Lee Daniels, *Jackie Robinson: An Intimate Portrait* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996); Sharon Robinson, *Stealing Home* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).
10. Mann, *Jackie Robinson Story*, 22-23. Rowan and Robinson, *Wait Till Next Year*, 103, also mentions Davis, but without reference to the Harlem Councilman's Communist Party affiliation.
11. See Robinson and Smith, *My Own Story*, 56-64; Mann, *Branch Rickey*, 219, 223-24.
12. Among the more noteworthy books in this mode are Bill Roeder, *Jackie Robinson* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1950); Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Roger Kahn, *The Era: 1947-1957* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1993); Harvey Frommer, *Rickey, and Robinson: The Men Who Broke Baseball's Color Barrier* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); Harvey Frommer, *Jackie Robinson* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984); and Maury Allen, *Jackie Robinson: A Life Remembered* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987).
13. Allen, *Jackie Robinson*, 53.

14. Lester Rodney makes one appearance in *The Era* by Roger Kahn—as an authority on Dodger manager Leo Durocher’s exceedingly profane vocabulary. Kahn, *The Era*, 156n. He, the *Worker* and the Parry go unmentioned in Kahn’s assessment that “baseball integration proceeds from the passion of a white Methodist Republican, the foresight of a conservative Governor, and a Jewish counterstrike at anti-Semitism.” Roger Kahn, *The Era*, 44. Bill Roeder described the Bear Mountain Dodger spring training camp tryout for two aging Negro League players in March 1945, initiated by sportswriters from a Harlem Weekly and the *Worker*, as having a “sickening Red tinge,” arranged by some “agitators,” at a time when “baseball was beginning to feel real pressure from the anti-discrimination forces, some of which were believed to be Communistic.” Roeder, *Jackie Robinson*, 10. A rare, perhaps unique, early reference to the *Worker* in a work concerned with baseball’s color line directed at a general audience came not in a biography of Jackie Robinson, but in New York *Daily News* sports columnist Dick Young’s 1951 biography of Dodger catcher Roy Campanella, in which Young mentioned the “*Daily Worker*, communistic organ which pounded hard and unceasingly against the color line in organized ball.” Dick Young, *Roy Campanella* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1951), 95.
15. *Baseball: A Film By Ken Burns*, “Sixth Inning” (1994); Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *Baseball: An Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 282-300.
16. Naison, “Lefties and Righties,” 129-40; Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 213-14.
17. Naison, “Lefties and Righties,” 129-40.
18. Harvey A. Levenstein, “The Worker, Daily Worker” in Joseph R. Conlin, ed., *The American Radical Press 1880-1960* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 233.
19. Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 36.
20. Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*, 35.
21. See works cited above in note 1.
22. Falkner, *Great Time Coming*, 68.
23. Buhle, Buhle, and Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, 176.
24. Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 120.
25. *New York Times*, *Newspaper in Education Curriculum Guide: Jackie Robinson* (1997).
26. Joseph Dorinson and Joram Warmund, eds., *Jackie Robinson: Race, Sports and the American Dream* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998).
27. Bill Mardo, “Robinson-Robeson,” in Dorinson and Warmund, *Jackie Robinson*, 101.
28. Henry Foner, “A Celebration of Jackie Robinson,” *Jewish Currents* (Oct. 1997): 20.
29. Foner. “A Celebration,” 34; also see Foner, “Mah Nishtanah,” in Dorinson and Warmund, *Jackie Robinson*, 70-71.
30. *New York Times*, 13 Apr. 1997.
31. Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Are You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), vii.
32. Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957); Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking, 1957); Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (New York: Viking, 1960).
33. Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); John E. Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace: American Communism and Anticommunism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996); Harvey Klehr and John E. Haynes, *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself* (New York: Twayne, 1992).
34. Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*; Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are The Crimes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), esp. 3-42; Naison, *Communists in Harlem*. See also Mark Naison’s review of Klehr, “Communism from the Top Down,” *Radical History Review* 32: 97-101 (1985).

35. Paul Lyons, *Philadelphia Communists 1936-1956* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 62. For an early, journalistic example of this "human interest" approach to Party history see Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
36. Draper, *Present of Things Past*, 117-53.
37. Maurice Isserman, "Three Generations: Historians View American Communism," *Labor History* (Fall 1985): 544-45.
38. As most completely documented in Kelly E. Rusinack, "Baseball on the Radical Agenda: The *Daily* and *Sunday Worker* on the Desegregation of Major League Baseball, 1933-1947" (master's thesis, Clemson University, 1995), a condensed version of which appeared in Dorinson and Warmund, *Jackie Robinson*.
39. *Daily Worker*, 18 through 20 Jul. 1942; Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 Jul. 1942; Pittsburgh *Courier*, 25 Jul. 1942; Los Angeles *Times*, 18 Jul. 1942; Chicago *Tribune*, 17 Jul. 1942; New York *Herald-Tribune*, 17 Jul. 1942. The *New York Times* carried no report. One paper that reported the story, but without reference to the *Worker*, was *PM*, its competitor for New York's Popular Front-oriented readership, an omission sharply noted by the *Worker*. See, *PM*, 17 and 19 Jul. 1942; *Daily Worker*, 21 Jul. 1942.
40. For a particularly dramatic rendering, see Murray Polner, *Branch Rickey* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 149-50; see also Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2000), 110-11; Robert Peterson, *Only The Ball Was White* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 177; Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 31; *Baseball: A Film by Ken Burns*, "Sixth Inning"; Bill Mardo, "Robinson-Robeson", 101-02.
41. As recounted in Polner, *Branch Rickey*, 149-50.
42. The paper's previous (and future) sports editor Lester Rodney had left for military service in early June. Lester Rodney, "In Which We Say So Long for Duration," *Daily Worker*, 5 Jun. 1942; Nat Low, "Lester Rodney Goes Off to Battle Hitler," *Daily Worker*, 7 Jun. 1942.
43. *Daily Worker*, 25 Jun. 1942. In its coverage of the meeting, the *Worker* did not identify any specific article as having provoked it. *Daily Worker*, 18 through 20 Jul. 1942. No other statement attributed to Durocher had appeared in its pages in the period before the meeting took place.
44. Dan Parker quoted in Pittsburgh *Courier*, 25 Jul. 1942; Golenbock, *Bums*, 111.
45. Howe and Coser, *The American Communist Party*, 414-17; Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*, 141-43.
46. Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*, 143.
47. See, e.g., *Daily Worker*, 23 Mar. 1942; 23 and 25 May 1942; 5, 22, 25, and 27 Jun. 1942.
48. *Daily Worker*, 26 May 1942.
49. *Daily Worker*, 23 May 1942.
50. Pittsburgh *Courier*, 5 Aug. 1939 (capitalization as in the original).
51. See *Daily Worker*, 23 Mar. 1942; Lester Rodney, "White Dodgers, Black Dodgers," in Dorinson and Warmund, *Jackie Robinson*, 91.
52. *Daily Worker*, 6 and 7 Aug. 1939. In its April 1947 summary of its campaign against the color line "Daily Worker Led War on Baseball Jimcrow," the paper quoted Durocher as saying in 1939 simply that "some of the Negro players belong in the big leagues. We all know their capabilities." *Daily Worker*, 12 Apr. 1947.
53. For what it's worth, the entire incident goes unmentioned in Durocher's two autobiographies. See, Leo Durocher. *The Dodgers and Me: The Inside Story* (Chicago: Ziff-Davis, 1948); Leo Durocher, written with Ed Linn, *Nice Guys Finish Last* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975).
54. *Daily Worker*, 18 through 20 Jul. 1942.
55. Pittsburgh *Courier*, 25 Jul. 1942.
56. Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 Jul. 1942.
57. *Daily Worker*, 18 Jul. 1942.

58. "Tryouts in Pittsburgh promised by Pirate Owner", *Daily Worker*, 28 Jul. 1942; "Cleveland to Consider Negro Players," *Daily Worker*, 29 Jul. 1942; "Phils Willing to Sign Negroes," *Daily Worker*, 31 Jul. 1942. *PM* ran similar reports of purported major league readiness to consider black playing talent. *PM*, 19 Jul. 1942.
59. *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 Jul. 1942.
60. Keck quoted in Pittsburgh *Courier*, 25 Jul. 1942.
61. *Chicago Defender*, 25 Jul. 1942.
62. *Baltimore Afro-American*, 8 Aug. 1942.
63. *Baltimore Afro-American*, 1 Aug. 1942.
64. *PM*, 17 Jul. 1942.
65. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 39-40.
66. *Daily Worker*, 23 Aug. 1936.
67. Mardo in Dorinson and Warmund, *Jackie Robinson*, 102; Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 41; William Marshall, *Baseball's Pivotal Era 1945-1951* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 122.
68. *Daily Worker*, 4 Dec. 1943; *New York Times*, 4 Dec. 1943; *Baltimore Afro-American*, 4, 11, and 18 Dec. 1943; Ronald A. Smith, "The Paul Robeson-Jackie Robinson Saga and a Political Collision," *Journal of Sports History* 6: 5-29 (Summer 1979).
69. *Daily Worker*, 4 and 5 Dec. 1943.
70. See Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 37; Naison, "Lefties and Righties," 140.
71. *New York Times*, 18 Apr. 1945; *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 Apr. 1945.
72. On Pemberton's political connections also see *New York Times*, 7 Mar. 1946. On Fauntleroy's colorful, if often self-promoting, career, which included flying for Haile Selassie and gun running for Moise Tschombe, see John Paul Nugent, *The Black Eagle* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971); Betty Kaplan Gubert, "Hubert Fauntleroy Julian," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (New York: Simon & Schuster/Macmillan, 1996), 1514-15.
73. *New York Times*, 18 Apr. 1945; *New York Post*, 18 Apr. 1945; *PM*, 18 Apr. 1945. The *Worker* that day carried an account of the game, as well as a Nat Low column headlined, "Anti-Jimcrow Campaign Reaches a New Stage," which urged readers "to continue writing and wiring the magnates," neither of which mentioned the picketing at Yankee Stadium. *Daily Worker*, 18 Apr. 1945.
74. *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 Apr. 1945.
75. *New York Times*, 18 Apr. 1945. The Yankee Stadium demonstration did produce a notably obtuse response from Yankee General Manager Larry MacPhail who attempted to rebut the charge of discrimination by insisting that "Negroes had always been employed at Yankee Stadium"-in the grounds and concession departments and in the office. *New York Times*, 19 Apr. 1945.
76. *Daily Worker*, 30 Jul. 1945.
77. Howe and Coser, *American Communist Party*, 440-48; Isserman. *Which Side Were You On?*, 233-34.
78. *Daily Worker*, 30 Jul. 1945.
79. *Daily Worker*, 30 Jul. 1945; *Daily Worker*, 14, 16, 18, and 19 Aug. 1945; *New York Age*, 18 and 25 Aug. 1945.
80. *Daily Worker*, 14 Aug. 1945.
81. *Daily Worker*, 19 Aug. 1945.
82. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 37.
83. See Levenstein, "The Worker, Daily Worker" in Conlin, *The American Radical Press*, 235; Buhle, Buhle, and Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, 176; Haynes, *Red Scare*, 36. At most, the *Worker* thus accounted for no more than one half of one percent of the more than 5,000,000 daily (and over 7,000,000 on Sundays) total newspaper circulation in New York City in the 1940s. See

- New York Times*, 1 Jul. 1945. As Kelly Rusinack has observed, the *Worker's* "relatively small readership and the stigma attached to Communism even during the Depression decade most likely undermined any direct influence the *Worker* might have had on major league baseball." Rusinack, "Baseball on the Radical Agenda," in Dorinson and Warmund, *Jackie Robinson*, 84.
84. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 34-35; Stephen H. Norwood and Harold Brackman, "Going to Bat for Jackie Robinson: The Jewish Role in Breaking Baseball's Color Line," *Journal of Sports History* 26: 121-24 (Spring 1999); Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 120; Ira Berkow, *Red: A Biography of Red Smith* (New York: Times Books, 1986), 108; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Jul. 1942.
 85. *Pittsburgh Courier*, Aug. 23, 1947.
 86. George Charney, *A Long Journey*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968).
 87. On LaGuardia and Goldstein see *New York Times*, 12 Aug. 1945, 24 Sep. 1945; on Muchnick, see Norwood and Brackman, "Going to Bat," 124-25, which challenges the long-standing view that Muchnick was attempting to curry favor from a largely black constituency by demonstrating that his district was almost entirely white in the 1940s and remained so through the 1950s.
 88. Roeder, *Jackie Robinson*, 74-80.
 89. For the passage (by a bi-partisan majority in the legislature at the urging of Republican New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey) and provisions of the law, see the *New York Times*, 1 and 6 Mar. 1945; Paul D. Moreno, *From Direct Action to Affirmative Action: Fair Employment Law and Policy in America, 1933-1972* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 108-11; Freeman, *Working Class New York*, 68-69; Roger Kahn, *The Era*, 44. Kahn does attribute more significance to the passage of the law on Rickey's activities than I do. See Kahn, *The Era*, 46.
 90. Mann, *Branch Rickey*, 212-14.
 91. The Yankees did not field a black ballplayer until 1955. Indeed, Yankee management evidently was so little intimidated by the anti-discrimination law that the team's general manager had no compunction about offering overtly racist explanations for the team's continuing refusal to sign black ballplayers. Kahn, *The Era*, 45n.
 92. On Rickey's politics, see Carl Prince, *Brooklyn's Dodgers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 23-25; for Rickey's reaction to pressure from the left, see Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 47; Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 123.
 93. Roeder, *Jackie Robinson*, 170-71; Norwood and Brackman, "Going to Bat," 126.
 94. Naison, "Lefties and Righties," 140.
 95. *Ibid.*, 138-39.
 96. Lyons, *Philadelphia Communists*, 120.
 97. The *Daily Worker's* coverage of this issue over the years preceding Robinson's debut has been carefully traced in Rusinack, "Baseball on the Radical Agenda" (thesis).
 98. Quoted in Howe and Coser, *The American Communist Party*, 191.
 99. *Daily Worker*, 16 Jan. 1941.
 100. Naison, "Righties and Lefties," 137
 101. Rusinack, "Baseball on the Radical Agenda" (thesis), 112.
 102. *Ibid.*, 119.
 103. *Daily Worker*, 8 Mar. 1940; 1 Jan. 1941; 20 Feb. 20, 1941.
 104. *Daily Worker*, 5 Aug. 1939 (emphasis added)
 105. See Statement of George M. Trautman (President of National Association of Baseball Clubs) in U.S. Senate, Subcommittee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce: 83d Cong. 1st Sess., *Hearings: Broadcasting and Televising Baseball Games (1953)*, 19 (May 6, 1953).
 106. See Richard Polenberg, *War and Society* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1972), 120-21; James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom 1940-1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 462, 510; Nat Glazer and Frederick Hoffman, "Behind the Philadelphia Strike,"

- Politics* (Nov. 1944), 306-08.
107. Buck O'Neill, quoted in Ward and Burns, *Baseball: An Illustrated History*, 230.
 108. Sig Jakucki, quoted in Paul Dickson, *Baseball's Greatest Quotations* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 205.
 109. Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 164-65.
 110. *Daily Worker*, 16 Mar. 1947.
 111. *Ibid.*
 112. *Daily Worker*, 27 Mar. 1947.
 113. McGowen's report appeared in the *New York Times*, 16 Mar. 1947.
 114. *Daily Worker*, 27 Mar. 1947.
 115. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 164-65.
 116. *The Sporting News*, 26 Mar. 1947, quoted in Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 163.
 117. See "The Negro Player Steps on the Scale" (editorial), *The Sporting News*, 21 May 1947.
 118. *The Sporting News*, 26 Mar. 1947, quoted in Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 163. On opposition to Robinson from players on what he terms the "dissension-ridden Dodgers" during spring training, see Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 168-73.
 119. Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 163.
 120. *Daily Worker*, 3 Apr. 1947.
 121. *Daily Worker*, 4 Apr. 1947.
 122. *Daily Worker*, 22 Apr. 1947.
 123. *Daily Worker*, 30 Apr. 1947.
 124. *Ibid.*
 125. Lester Rodney, "White Dodgers, Black Dodgers," in Dorinson and Warmund, eds. *Jackie Robinson*, 87.
 126. See Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 171; Paul Buhle and Michael Fermanowsky, "Baseball and Social Conscience: An Interview with Lester Rodney," 29 Dec. 1981, 65-66, UCLA Oral History Program, University of California at Los Angeles Library Department of Special Collections.
 127. See Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 172.
 128. *Baltimore Afro-American*, 3 May 1947; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 May 1947; Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 173; Robinson, *I Never Had it Made*, 61.
 129. *Daily Worker*, 23 through 25 Apr. 1947.
 130. See *Daily Worker*, 7 and 10 May 1947.
 131. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 May 1947; Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 175-76.
 132. Robinson quoted in Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 172.
 133. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 182.
 134. See Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 182-89; *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 May 1947.
 135. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 188.
 136. *New York Post*, 10 May 1947.
 137. *Ibid.* For further discussion of Robinson's ordeal during these difficult weeks, Norwood and Brackman, "Going to Bat for Jackie Robinson," 132-33.
 138. *Daily Worker*, 7 May 1947.
 139. *Daily Worker*, 10 May 1947.
 140. *Daily Worker*, 21 May 1947.
 141. *Ibid.*
 142. Bill Roeder, *Jackie Robinson*, 138.

143. John Thorn in *Baseball: A Film by Ken Burns*, "Sixth Inning."
144. Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 211-16.
145. *Daily Worker*, 11 Jul. 1949.
146. *Daily Worker*, 19 Jul. 1949.
147. Ibid.
148. *Daily Worker*, 21 Jul. 1949.
149. Robert Warshow, "The 'Idealism' of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg," *Commentary* (Nov. 1953), reprinted in Robert Warshow, *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Athenacum, 1971), 69-81.
150. *Daily Worker*, 29 Aug. 1949.
151. *Daily Worker*, 17 May 1950.
152. Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 184.
153. *Daily Worker*, 2 Oct. 1949.
154. See Rampersad, *Jackie Robinson*, 217.
155. *Daily Worker*, 20 Nov. 1949.
156. *Daily Worker*, 25 Nov. 1949.
157. *Daily Worker*, 5 Oct. 1949.
158. *Daily Worker*, 9 Oct. 1949.
159. *Daily Worker*, 12 Oct. 1949.
160. Ibid.
161. Rodney, "White Dodgers, Black Dodgers," 88; *Daily Worker*, 7 Jun. 1942.
162. *Daily Worker*, 3 Oct. 1951.
163. Rodney left the Party and the paper in the winter of 1957-1958, in the wake of Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, and the failure of *Worker* editor John Gates, whom Rodney supported, CO gain control of the Party and lead it in a direction that would be independent of Moscow. Peter Duffy, "Red Rodney," *Village Voice*, 10 Jun. 1997; *Daily Worker*, 13 Jan. 1958; *New York Times*, 13 Jan. 1958. The last issue of the *Daily Worker* appeared on 13 Jan. 1958. *New York Times*, Jan. 13, 1958.
164. Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment*, 36.
165. *Daily Worker*, 2 Jan. 1934.