

Guide to  
the Microfilm Edition  
of the

FBI File on  
A. Philip Randolph

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## Introduction

A. Philip Randolph (1889-1979) was one of the most outspoken and controversial black leaders of his day. Born in Crescent City, Florida, Randolph rose from poor surroundings to emerge as a talented labor leader. He traveled to New York City, worked as a railroad car porter, and attended the City College of New York, where he earned a degree in philosophy and became a member of the Socialist party. He founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925, the organization with which he staked his first and major claim to fame. He later was the charter president of the National Negro Congress from 1936 to 1940. He refused to run again in 1940 because he believed the Congress to be "deliberately packed with Communists." In 1941, Randolph organized the March on Washington movement, which led directly to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's issuance of Executive Order 8802 establishing the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). He advocated equality within the armed services during the war and became the center of controversy afterward, when he suggested that blacks should avoid military service in order to protest Jim Crow treatment in the armed forces. An investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) ensued, since the United States still was technically at war and advocacy of draft evasion was considered to be treason. The issue of armed forces inequalities was taken up by the U.S. Congress in the meantime, and the HUAC investigation stalled. Because of his Socialist leanings (he was nominated for, but declined, the vice presidency on the 1944 Socialist party ticket), he was investigated continuously for suspected membership in the Communist party. From 1940 onward, however, he renounced communism and actively barred Communists from membership in his labor organizations. He was elected vice president of the AFL-CIO in 1955 and became one of the leaders of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Randolph's open repudiation of the Communist party in 1940 came at a time when communism was gaining popularity within labor ranks. Still, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) continued to track his associates and monitor his speeches and writings closely, as well as the labor organizations he headed. The

documents in this file include memorandums, letters, teletypes, newspaper clippings, and copies of the *Messenger*, a publication that Randolph edited between 1917 and 1928. Most of the material was compiled in the 1940s and early 1950s, but a significant part deals with his involvement in the various marches on Washington in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The FBI kept information on Randolph until 1964.

The documents reproduced here were drawn from the Washington files of the FBI and have been released under the Freedom of Information Act; certain documents or portions of documents have been deleted by the FBI pursuant to provisions of that legislation. The material has been filmed in the exact order and condition in which it was released, and every effort has been made to publish the most legible copies available.

The file is in approximate chronological order, and the FBI did not index documents. The Roll Notes is not a complete inventory of the file; however, it gives an indication of the types of material or specific documents that may be particularly worthwhile for research.

## ROLL NOTES

### FBI File on A. Philip Randolph

Bureau File Number 100-55616

#### Section 1:

*September 1922 - March 1963*

**Roll 1, 0001-0310**

- Request by Randolph for FBI assistance after receiving black human hand with a letter signed "K.K.K." in the mail, 9/5/22
- Request by Congressman John B. Hollister (Ohio) for information on Randolph
- File cards on Randolph; list of activities
- Field reports on the March on Washington movement
- Report on speech ban in Memphis, Tennessee, November 1943
- Information on the National Non-Partisan Rule Conference for Negroes, 6/25-26/44
- Information on speech at Memphis, Tennessee, 3/31/44
- Investigation into possible Communist connections of Randolph during 1947
- Treason investigation of Randolph regarding his call for black men to resist compulsory military service
- Discussion of same in the *Congressional Record*, 4/22/48
- Booklet: "Communism"
- Copy of the *Messenger*
- Newspaper clippings on the universal military training controversy
- Reports on the hearings before the Committee on the Armed Services, March/April 1948
- Letters to the FBI requesting Randolph's arrest
- Check of indexes and/or printed hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 5/6/58
- Information on the Youth March for Integrated Schools, 10/11/58

#### Section 2:

*October 1963 - March 1975*

**Roll 1, 0311-END**

- Search-slip page numbers, requests for information on Randolph
- Newspaper clippings

Report on Randolph's appointment to President Johnson's National Advisory Council for the War on Poverty in 1964;  
Randolph declines  
File closed in December 1964  
File summary, 7/8/70