

Ottley leads Labor Day Parade

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This year's Labor Day parade will, for the first time, reflect fair recognition of Black contributions to trade unionism with Peter Jerome Ottley, Grenada-born president of Local 144, Hotel, Hospital, Nursing Home and Allied Service Union, S.E.I.U., as grand marshal.

He will lead the marchers as they step off at 11 a.m. on Fifth Ave. at 44th St., along the new route that extends to 72nd St. on the east side of Central Park. Some 150 marching bands have been signed on for the event, according to the Central Labor Council.

Council President Thomas Van Arsdale said Ottley was selected largely for his accomplishments as leader of Local 144. Coming here as a young man, he began working in the hotel industry and in the process got interested in the trade union movement.

Out of that early experience grew Ottley's conviction that "strong and



PETER OTTLEY

democratic trade unions are the only route to economic and social betterment for all workers throughout the country," Local 144 said.

Ottley was elected secretary-treasurer of Local 144 in 1950 and has remained its "chief executive" ever since. In 1958 after a series of changes in the local's constitution, he was elected its president.

By the time his title changed to president, Ottley had begun to expand the union's membership. From hotel workers he first organized nursing home employees at a time they were suffering

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from below poverty wages and miserable working conditions.

Thus the local began both to expand its membership and to change its composition from exclusively a "hotel union" to one based on "service" in the hotel and health fields.

Active organization of hospital workers took place in 1958 and 1959. By 1960 a broad-based Local 144 had emerged. It included hotel workers, hospital and nursing home employees; and by 1964-65 it had also embraced licensed practical nurses and registered nurses in nursing homes.

Ottley also initiated organizing of nurses in hospitals along with technical and professional employees, office and clerical workers. They now make up a Local 144 membership of some 30,000.

With the expansion of his union grew Ottley's involvement on a wider level, as in the Hotel and Motel Trades Council of New York, AFL-CIO. This coalition bar-



IN ACTION - Local 144 President Peter Ottley, grand marshal of 1987 Labor Day Parade, reads union demands on picketline of last city-wide nursing home strike. Militant union has been successful in winning best contracts in health care industry in nation.

gains for all employees in the large New York City hotels and Ottley has been on its board and is its executive vice president.

He is member of the executive board of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AFL-CIO with over 850,000 members. Local 144 is the second largest of its affiliates.

Ottley's accomplishments have earned him widespread recognition that drew him into other areas of voluntary service. He is the recipient of a number of citations, medals and awards.

Among his community and service honors are the "Torch of Hope Award" by the City of Hope; Automation House's "Open Door" Award; a citation for distinction from the Newspaper Guild. Named "Man of the Year" by the Catholic Inter-racial Council," Mr. Ottley received in 1986 the Mayor's Liberty Medal given by Mayor Koch to distinguished immigrants.