

# National Equal Rights Congress Comes to End

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(Only representative from Illinois)

Washington, D. C., Oct. 13. — Coming from all sections of the country, even from California, men and women assembled at the seat of congress in the fiftieth year since congress voted in favor of the fourteenth amendment conferring citizenship upon Americans in a National Citizenship Rights Congress Wednesday and Thursday in the beautiful John Wesley A. M. E. Zion Church, Rev. W. C. Brown, pastor, the convention concluding on Friday with the ninth annual meeting of the National Equal Rights League, which called the congress.

The meeting was unique in the last decade, in that leaders who were in opposition 10 years ago got together for equal rights. One hundred and thirty delegates from 21 states were present and a spirit of getting together prevailed.

The National Equal Rights League has concluded its sessions and adjourned to meet a year hence. This is the organization which, four years ago, indorsed President Wilson's candidacy and urged our people throughout the country to do the same. These leaders had become incensed at the treatment of the Race by a Republican President and the Republican party, had held a splendid reception by Candidate Wilson and an earnest assurance that he would treat the Negro as a man and citizen. The organization almost went to smash because of this radical step of indorsement of Wilson and divided forces, but the majority, led by Bishop Walters and William Monroe Trotter, worked, lectured on the stump and through the columns of the Guardian and caused thousands of Negroes to vote the Democratic ticket, who had never done so before, and thus helped land Wilson in the White House.

Remembering Grover Cleveland's honest and fair administrations people everywhere looked for an improvement on the great Democrat's rule so far as we were concerned. Every 10-year-old child throughout the country knows the result, for segregation as encouraged and practical in Uncle Sam's workshops here in Washington, has been given a new meaning and impetus under President Wilson, and members of the Race have been snubbed, degraded and humiliated during this administration as never before since freedom.

Two visits of protest, led by the officers of the National Equal Rights Association, which held itself responsible to the Race, were made to President Wil-

son, one in 1913, eight months after he assumed office, at which time the writer was one of the number.

The President then told us he was not aware of the segregation orders. We gave him a fac simile copy of one of the orders by one of his chiefs, and he kept it, saying he would look into it. We left him a monster protest from all over the country, signed by 10,000 persons, who did not know about segregated lunch rooms, toilet rooms and rest rooms in the departments, even if the chief magistrate did not.

After waiting a whole year, with no change for the better, with things growing steadily worse in the way of discharges, and demotions, in spite of civil service, the committee, led by the intrepid William Monroe Trotter, went back to see President Wilson again in 1914, when he attempted to defend segregation. And when Mr. Trotter showed the inconsistency of his position, he lost his temper, and the country was informed that the President had been insulted by Trotter! Since that time and up to the present, every member of the Race holding public office in government service, has been deposed and white men appointed to their places, thus showing President Wilson's idea of justice, administered with "liberality and good feeling" to a Race already weighed down with prejudice from every other source.

The National Equal Rights League called its annual meeting in this campaign year in Washington City, just outside the White House, and asked the Race everywhere to send delegates. The response in person was from as far west as Michigan and Illinois; by proxy from the other ocean.

After preliminaries, fine addresses, plans for local organization, reports from committees and election of officers, the real battle came over adoption of report of state and country. The report reviewed racial history of the past four years, and urged on our people to unite in support of Charles E. Hughes in the coming election. Judge Thomas E. Walker, a highly respected lawyer and citizen of the District of Columbia, opposed the adoption of this recommendation, as did another prominent lawyer, W. Ashbio Hawkins of Baltimore and others. Their grounds were that political recommendation had well nigh broken up the organization four years ago; that the Colored people were going to vote for Hughes anyway, and that no one knew Mr. Hughes' attitude toward us, and because it would seem to make of this a political organization, and they thought it enough to condemn President Wilson's policy against us.

Seeing that the convention seemed evenly divided on the subject, your correspondent took the floor for the first time and showed the delegates it was a sacred duty we owed our people to urge them to use their political strength

that the man whose segregation policy we were denouncing; that the only effective way to make our protest felt was to do the only thing we could do to defeat the man who had injured us more than any President in the history of our freedom; indorse the man who had best chance of defeating him, and publish that indorsement from the houstop, in every Race paper, from every pulpit and in every club; to organize clubs to do every possible thing to defeat the man who had so insulted us and jeopardized our liberty and our economic welfare.

I tried to show them that we must so mass our political strength and so wield it in our own defense at all times and in all places, that no President again would ever dare to offer us such insults as we had suffered the past four years, and thus teach them to fear our vote as they now do the labor vote.

When the final vote was taken for adoption of the report the indorsement won overwhelmingly, and I was very proud to have Judge Walker, who had fought the indorsement in committee and on the floor, tell me that I had convinced him it was the thing to do, and that if I had not come from Chicago he felt sure the report would not have been adopted.