

## The Pan-African Congress

THE Pan-African Congress is an established fact. It was held February 19, 20, 21, 1919, at the Grand Hôtel, Boulevard des Capucines, Paris. The Executive Committee consisted of M. Blaise Diagne, President; Dr. W. E. Burghardt DuBois, Secretary; Mrs. Ida Gibbs Hunt, Assistant Secretary, and M. E. F. Fredericks. The Congress maintained an office at the Hôtel de Malte, 63 Rue Richelieu, with office hours from 10 A. M. to 6 P. M.

Fifty-seven delegates, including a number of native Africans educated abroad, were present at the Congress. In all, fifteen countries were represented, as follows:

United States of America	16
French West Indies	13
Haiti	7
France	7
Liberia	3
Spanish Colonies	2
Portuguese Colonies	1
San Domingo	1
England	1
British Africa	1
French Africa	1
Algeria	1
Egypt	1
Belgian Congo	1
Abyssinia	1
Total	57

France was represented by the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the French Chamber; Belgium, by M. Van Overgergh, of the Belgian Peace Commission; Portugal, by M. Freire d' Andrade, former Minister of Foreign Affairs. William English Walling and Charles Edward Russell were in attendance from the United States of America.

At the first meeting held Wednesday afternoon, February 19, M. Diagne, Deputy from Senegal to the French Chamber, opened the Congress with words of praise for French colonial rule. He expressed the hope that the ideal of racial unity would inspire all of African descent throughout the entire world.

Many interesting speeches followed, all of which struck a characteristic note. M. Candace, Deputy from Guadeloupe, insisted with much eloquence and frankness that color should not be considered in the maintenance of human rights. That the rights of black Americans met with so little respect in the United States was, he declared, a matter for special deprecation.

Two other deputies from the French West Indies, M. Boisneuf and M. Lagrosillière, spoke with equal eloquence and expressed their inability to understand how Americans could fail to treat as equals those who in common with themselves were giving their lives for democracy and justice.

Mr. King, delegate from Liberia to the Peace Conference, gave an interesting exposition of Liberia's aims and accomplishments and expressed the hope that people of African descent everywhere would take pride in that little independent black Republic and in every way possible aid in her future development. "Let us," he concluded, "be considered a home for the darker races in Africa. It is your duty to help. We are asking for rights, but let us not, therefore, forget our duties, for remember wherever there are rights, there are also duties and responsibilities."

The Chairman of Foreign Affairs for France emphasized the fact that the sentiment of France on equality and liberty, irrespective of color, was shown by the fact that she had six colored representatives in the French Chamber, one of whom was the distinguished Chairman of the Congress, M. Diagne, who served on his Committee. Even before the Revolution France had pursued the same policy.

M. Overgergh spoke of the reforms in the Belgian colony and of an International Geographical Society which he represented.

M. d' Andrade talked of the opportunities and liberties given the natives in the Portuguese colonies.

William English Walling said that while he had to blush when America was being arraigned, he felt that changes were already going on in the United States and that in time Americans, whether willingly or not, would have to submit to the opinion of the world and accord to her colored contingent full justice and equality. She must

yield or go down before the darker races of the world. If France has six colored representatives in Parliament, he said, the United States of America, considering her black population, should have at least ten colored representatives in her legislative body.

Charles Edward Russell's address stirred and inspired all. He said the old notion that one race is inferior to another is false, and this war has helped to kill that idea. This Congress, he felt, was a splendid step forward. Africa should press her claims here and now. "It is a great opportunity and yours is the duty to fulfill it," he said. "It is a duty for Africa and for world democracy, for black and white alike. Insist upon your rights!"

At the second session, Mr. Archer, ex-Mayor of Battersea, London, England, spoke of the importance of demanding one's rights, of the value of unity of purpose and effort in ameliorating the condition of people of color throughout the world, starting with the United States and England. He said that while England accords many rights to her citizens of color, she does not give them as much representation as France. "We must fight for our just rights at all times," he concluded.

Dr. George Jackson, an American, spoke of his experiences in the Belgian Congo, and explained why the natives had come to hate German Kultur. As a colored American he also had often had cause to blush for America.

Mrs. A. W. Hunton, from the United States of America, spoke of the importance of women in the world's reconstruction and regeneration of today, and of the necessity of seeking their co-operation and counsel.

At the afternoon session of the last day Mme. Jules Siefried, President of the French National Association for the Rights of Women, brought words of encouragement from the International Council, then meeting in Paris. She said that no one could appreciate better than women the

struggle for broader rights and liberties.

Resolutions were passed providing for another Congress to be held in Paris during the year 1921.

The following resolutions, to be presented to the Peace Conference now in session, were unanimously adopted:

- I. The Negroes of the world in Pan-African Congress assembled demand in the interests of justice and humanity, for the purpose of strengthening the forces of Civilization, that immediate steps be taken to develop the 200,000,000 of Negroes and Negroids; to this end, they propose:
  - 1. That the Allied and Associated Powers establish a Code of Laws for the international protection of the Natives of Africa similar to the proposed international Code for Labor.
  - 2. That the League of Nations establish a permanent Bureau charged with the special duty of overseeing the application of these laws to the political, social and economic welfare of the Natives.
- II. The Negroes of the world demand that hereafter the Natives of Africa and the Peoples of African descent be governed according to the following principles:
  - 1. *-The Land:* The land and its natural resources shall be held in trust for the Natives and at all times they shall have effective ownership of as much land as they can profitably develop.
  - 2. *-Capital:* The investment of capital and granting of concessions shall be so regulated as to prevent the exploitation of Natives and the exhaustion of the natural wealth of the country. Concessions shall always be limited in time and subject to State control. The growing social needs of the Natives must be regarded and the profits taxed for the social and material benefit of the Natives.
  - 3. *-Labor:* Slavery, forced labor and corporal punishment, except in punishment of crime, shall be abolished; and the general conditions of labor shall be prescribed and regulated by the State.
  - 4. *-Education:* It shall be the right of every Native child to learn to read and write his own language and the language of the trustee nation, at public expense, and to be given technical instruction in some branch of industry. The State shall also educate as large a number of Natives as possible in higher technical and cultural training and maintain a corps of Native teachers.
  - 5. *-Medicine and Hygiene:* It shall be recognized that human existence in the tropics calls for special safeguards and a scientific system of public hygiene. The State shall be responsible for medical care and sanitary conditions without discouraging collective and individual initiative. A service

created by the State shall provide physicians and hospitals, and shall enforce rules. The State shall establish a native medical staff.

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6. *-The State:* The Natives of Africa must have the right to participate in the government as fast as their development permits in conformity with the principle that the government exists for the Natives and not the Natives for the government. The Natives shall have voice in the government to the extent that their development permits, beginning at once with local and tribal government according to ancient usage, and extending gradually as education and experience proceeds, to the higher offices of State, to the end that, in time, Africa be ruled by consent of the Africans.

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7. *-Culture and Religion:* No particular religion shall be imposed and no particular form of human culture. There shall be liberty of conscience. The uplift of the Natives shall take into consideration their present condition and shall allow the utmost scope to racial genius, social inheritance and individual bent, so long as these are not contrary to the best established principles of civilization.

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8. *-Civilized Negroes:* *Wherever persons of African descent are civilized and able to meet the tests of surrounding culture, they shall be accorded the same rights as their fellow-citizens; they shall not be denied on account of race or color a voice in their own government, justice before the courts, and economic and social equality according to ability and desert.*

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9. *-The League of Nations:* Greater security of life and property shall be guaranteed the Natives; international labor legislation shall cover Native workers as well as whites; they shall have equitable representation in all the international institutions of the League of Nations, and the participation of the blacks themselves in every domain of endeavor shall be encouraged in accordance with the declared object of Article 19 of the League of Nations, to wit: "The well being and the development of these people constitute a sacred mission of civilization and it is proper in establishing the League of Nations to incorporate therein pledges for the accomplishment of this mission."

*Whenever it is proven that African Natives are not receiving just treatment at the hands of any State or that any State deliberately excludes its civilized citizens or subjects of Negro descent from its body politic and cultural, it shall be the duty of the League of Nations to bring the matter to the attention of the civilized world.*

Blaise Diagne, *President.*

W. E. B. Du Bois, *Secretary.*