

CONSTITUTION HALL

By Fred E. Hand
Manager

It is a fundamental obligation for an American to fight for the rights guaranteed him under the Constitution of the United States quite as much as it was for our forefathers to fight for the attainment of certain rights which belong to every human being. In this country a man's home is his castle and it is his right and duty to protect it against desecration or having his ownership right assailed to any way. This is the exact position of the National Society in reserving unto itself the right to determine who may or may not use it's property and under what conditions that courtesy may be granted. For this reason alone the National Society, in order to preserve and maintain it's self respect, must of necessity fight for the rights guaranteed it under the Constitution and not be weak enough to submit to intimidation on the part of any individual or groups who seek to assail it's prerogatives. The individual or organization which questions this right is trying to wreck the way of American life and if this Society submits to such it is equally guilty.

The Congress of the United States established the policy of separate facilities for the white and negro races in the District of Columbia and having done so the citizenry has followed this policy in established custom by providing separate facilities for these races in all schools, theatres, auditoriums, restaurants, hotels and some department stores. If a change in the custom is to be accomplished it should be started by the Congress of the United States in permitting Negro newspaper correspondents to sit in it's press galleries during sessions. It is not the obligation of the D.A.R. to pioneer in a policy which should be changed at its fountain head, if a change is desired by the people of the District of Columbia, and should this Society remove the "white artists only" clause from it's contracts, I believe this Society would become the object of great derision all over the country for it's weak-kneed

policy in not standing up for it's rights. If the Congress of the United States changed everything that it has established for the District of Columbia and if the citizens of the District by a majority, show that such a change is desired and it became the custom for theatres, auditoriums, hotels, restaurants, etc. to serve Negroes as well as whites, it would be obvious that we would have to conform to that custom. Until such a time comes however I urgently recommend that no change be made in our booking policy but that we keep our ears to the ground and our hands on the pulse of the situation so that we might conform when and if the customs are ever changed. But never do this under duress!

Having been a student of the theatre as well as the Negro during my entire life I feel somewhat qualified to speak on the subject from a business viewpoint. The large Negro audience we had at the Tuskegee concert was on its good behavior, well mannered, well groomed and well behaved in every way, but once having attained the goal of presenting Negro artists here and making Negro social functions out of their appearance, the glamour will soon wear off and their financial resources will not permit Negro patronage. In the meantime white patrons who do not care to mix with the Negroes will have fallen away from attendance and our bookings will drop away to virtually nothing. The proof of this is very well demonstrated in the fact that 80% of the audience which attended the Tuskegee concert were Negro showing that the great majority of the white population did not care to mix with such an audience.