

TRIBUTE TO MRS. L. W. HUGHES

By Mrs. C. E. Rogers

In every State and Nation there are "The Few" to whom "The Many" are indebted. Our own Mabel Williams Hughes is one of "The Few." John Addington Symonds said, "No deed shall perish which the soul has sown." Just as the soul moved Alice McLellan Birney to found our great organization so it was the soul which moved Mabel Williams Hughes to do a great work for the childhood of the world. So, today, "The Many" rise up to call her blessed.

When Mrs. Hughes was elected president of the Tennessee Congress she brought to the office an awareness of the needs of Public Education in Tennessee. No Sputnik was needed to arouse her to action.

A book "Our Public Schools" edited by her distinguished sister Miss Charl Ormond Williams, Fifth Vice-president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and Field Director of the National Education Association, served as the inspiration for the publication of the book "Tennessee's Public Schools" edited by Dr. Fred Smith, Dean of the University of Tennessee. Ten thousand copies were sold by P. T. A. leaders. This valuable little book was used as source material for addresses throughout the state. This book laid the groundwork for the unanimous passage of the General Education Bill of 1947 and the Sales Tax Bill which made it operable.

Public Health was next on her agenda. From the State Department of Health she secured a fund to finance Miss Cara Harris, Health Specialist, who also served as Extension Secretary. To this many County Health Units can be credited. Parent Education was motivated by securing Miss Neta McFee, Specialist in this field.

In the field of Public Relations Mrs. Hughes eliminated the opposition of school administrators to the P. T. A. Under her superb leadership the P. T. A. became the cement which bound together the educational forces of Tennessee.

Considering the outstanding record which Mrs. Hughes had made as National Membership Chairman and First Vice-President of the National Congress, the nominating committee was unanimous in asking her to be president of the National Congress. To this high office she was elected and inaugurated in Denver, Colorado, May 22, 1946. A gain of nearly two million members during her three year term of office established a new record in membership of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

As president of the Tennessee Congress I had the honor of presiding at the Tennessee Dinner honoring Mrs. Hughes, given at the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver. This was an outstanding social event. The place cards donated by Gov. Jim McCord carried the seal of the great State of Tennessee. HUGHES in letters of gold on blue satin which centered the table, iris, oak leaves, acorns, and morning glories made a lovely setting for the table which seated the forty-six Tennesseans.

Tributes to Mrs. Hughes were given by many distinguished Tennesseans. A large silver bowl engraved with name, date, and place, a gift from the Tennessee Congress of Parents and Teachers, was presented to Mrs. Hughes by Mrs. E. W. Hale, life long friend and former president of the Tennessee Congress. This was an occasion never to be forgotten by the forty-six Tennesseans who came to see Mrs. Hughes inaugurated as president of the largest organization on earth.

All great peoples have had a body of basic beliefs to serve as a guide. In line with our objects Mrs. Hughes got out the Four Point Program for the National Congress, HEALTH, EDUCATION, PARENT EDUCATION and WORLD UNDERSTANDING. I shall never forget what one school administrator said after reading it, "Well, we'll be doing this from now on." Another outstanding achievement was the establishment of

of a fully accredited course on Parent-Teacher Leadership Training at Northwestern University. Eight colleges in various parts of the United States joined in this project. The Golden Jubilee Celebration in Chicago, the Birney Memorial celebration at Marietta, Gas., the tea given by Mrs. Truman at the White House and the tea given by Mrs. Birney's daughter, Mrs. Harold Walker in Washington, D.C. honoring the members of the National Board were in celebration of our Golden Jubilee.

Mrs. Hughes made memorable addresses on these occasions. She was the first president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers to address a general session of the American Association of School Administrators, the greatest body of educators in the world. This address was printed in the Congressional Record.

The crowning achievement of Mrs. Hughes' administration was the building of our National Headquarters--"The House that Faith built."

With a vision for the Great Tomorrow, indomitable courage and a mighty faith, Mrs. Hughes appointed the first Headquarters committee in May 1947. She wanted the building to be a symbol of P. T. A. ideals, a memorial to our Founders and to the thousands of men and women who have dedicated themselves to creating a better world for childhood.

As your chairman for Quarters of Headquarters in Tennessee, I recall that many of us gave gifts as a memorial to our departed loved ones. A book of Gold in which the names of all donors were inscribed was presented to Mrs. Hughes. Twenty-six thousand dollars--a love offering to Mrs. Hughes, was given by the Tennessee Congress. This magnificent \$1,000,000 building was dedicated April 15, 1955. In the dedicatory address Mrs. Hughes said, and I quote, "We dedicate this new building to the inalienable rights of children that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness shall not perish from the earth." It stands today as a monument to the faith and courage of Mabel Williams Hughes. With this building she opened the door to tomorrow's world and gave the keys to the Kingdom of Childhood to the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. Mrs. Hughes attached the power belt to the P. T. A. that by teamwork the needs of childhood might be met.

Not in one Magic Day were these things wrought, but by building day by day, stone upon stone, sharing her vision with her co-workers, did she see the fulfillment of her dreams.

These are only a few of the tangible evidences of her creative mind--what the intangibles are, no one can reckon or compute. Since greatness is measured by the permanence of the work, these achievements will remain an inspiration to future generations.

Mrs. Hughes believes in the spiritual unity of women around the world, that IDEAS are still the most powerful of all missiles, that big ideas, not big bombs, will bring about a new and better day for the world.

Tonight we break the alabaster bos of precious ointment. Tennessee is honored to claim their great citizen--as wife, mother, educator, administrator, and Senator. We say, "Many daughters have done virtuously but thou excellest them all." I now present this portrait to the Tennessee Congress of Parents and Teachers. It will serve as an inspiration through all the ages to come and unveil the beauty and dignity of the life of Mabel Williams Hughes.