

FOR DISTRICT SUFFRAGE

The Meeting Last Night Addressed by Mr. Douglass.

Preparing a Bill for a Popular Vote on the Question—Talk of Other Speakers.

A meeting of residents of this city interested in obtaining suffrage in the District of Columbia was held at Green's Hall, 1721 Pennsylvania avenue, last night. Dr. Robert Keyburn presided, and although the attendance was small the meeting was an enthusiastic one.

A report from the executive committee was read, presenting the form of a petition to be presented to Congress, setting forth the injustice of depriving the citizens of this District of their right to vote, and demanding a change in the present form of government. Accompanying the petition was the draft of a bill to be introduced in Congress, providing for a special election to be held in the District to ascertain whether a majority of the people are in favor of or opposed to a change in the present form of government.

Provisions of the Bill.

The bill provides that within sixty days after its passage the Commissioners of the District of Columbia are hereby directed to cause a police census to be made of all the male residents in the District who shall have attained the age of twenty-one years, whose names and addresses shall be furnished upon printed lists.

A board of revision, whose duties shall be to correct all errors and omissions in the lists, is also provided for, and the bill says: "The members of the board of revision shall hold their sessions from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for the term of fifteen days, excluding Sundays, as above mentioned, and for their services in correcting and perfecting the lists of qualified voters shall receive the compensation of five dollars per day for each day they are in session."

"A supplemental list shall then be issued by the board of revision, and no person whose name shall not be found on the original printed lists or the supplemental printed lists of voters shall be entitled to vote.

The special election shall be held under the direction of the Commissioners not later than ninety days after the passage of the act. The Commissioners are authorized to appoint three judges of election for each of the twenty-two original legislative districts, who shall provide suitable places for holding the elections. "Said judges of election shall receive a compensation of \$5 each for their services on the day of the special election."

Two forms of ballots shall be prepared by the Commissioners. On one shall be printed: "In favor of the present form of government by Commissioners." On the other: "In favor of a representative form of government."

Cost of the Election.

The bill concludes: "In order to carry out the provisions of this bill the sum of \$10,000 be * * * and the same is hereby appropriated out of the revenues of the District of Columbia not otherwise appropriated."

The bill was accepted by the meeting, and a committee authorized to perfect the draft and present it to Congress. The chairman appointed Messrs. W. H. G. Simmons, Milford Spohn, Paul T. Bowen, James H. Smith, Geo. O. Cook, J. H. McCuen and F. H. Siddons, with Dr. Keyburn as chairman ex officio, to revise the draft of the bill.

Mr. Douglass' Speech.

This closed the business portion of the meeting, and speeches were declared to be in order. Mr. Frederick Douglass was the first speaker. He said he was present at the meeting to take sides, and to show that he was not afraid to take sides. Neither the frowns nor the smiles of the present government could deter him from expressing his partisanship in the cause of liberty. He often asks himself, he said, what have the people of the District done that they should be excluded from the privileges of the ballot box. Where, when and how did they incur the penalty of taxation without representation? He found no fault with the men who compose the present local government, but recalled the German proverb, that "Those who hold the cross bless themselves and their friends." He wants to be in a position to bless all of his friends. For instance, he wants public improvements in front of property owned by colored men. "If you don't know what I mean," he said, "just look at 17th street near the boundary."

He said one objection which had been urged against suffrage in the District is that colored men will have a vote. Well, what if they do? He is willing to trust the ignorant with the wise, because the wise will predominate. In order to disfranchise one-third of the population, consisting of colored people, the whites have disqualified themselves. The two-thirds are afraid they will be outvoted and governed by the one-third. He said this is cowardly and mean and small. Mr. Douglass spoke of the contradictory spectacle presented to the ministers of foreign nations by the presence of an unrepresentative form of government at the capital of the most progressive republic on the globe.

Other Speakers.

Rev. Mr. Lee, a well-known colored preacher, then addressed the audience. He said he was in favor of the cause for which soldiers shed their blood in the revolution. He said the whites had disfranchised all the people of this District to get rid of the negro. They ought to do better than this, for the south knows how to vote the whites and cheat the negro, and surely there are enough southern men in this District to do that. "I want the white men of the District to be free," said Mr. Lee. He said the District Commissioners are doubtless good men. God made one good man and put everything into his hands and that man slipped. It is not well to put too much into one man's hands.

Dr. Keyburn then called upon Milford Spohn of the Knights of Labor to tell the interest which his organization is taking in the movement for suffrage. Mr. Spohn said the labor organizations are in accord with the movement and heartily indorse it. Mr. Simmons also spoke of the interest taken by the labor unions in the work of the suffragists.