

EDITORIAL



AFRICA in Today's World

By C. I. West, M.D.

WOMEN OF AFRICA

"Although African women are enjoying fuller participation within their communities, their maximum effectiveness has been hampered by a shortage of trained leadership, low health and educational standards, the lack of leisure time and the forces of the tradition of their society" said Mai Padmore wife of the Liberian Ambassador to the United Nations.

Mme. Padmore, owner-manager of a huge rubber plantation and Liberia's expert protocol consultant, made this statement in 1960 following the first United States Conference of the Role of Women in Africa in New York in November 1959.

The evolution of woman's role in society from the position of chattel to that of emancipation with equality has been approximately the same story in all parts of the world. The African woman has had a longer period of subordination to the male than the women of Europe and America. Consequently the women of Africa are just now beginning to emerge upon their society's political, economic and civic scenes.

In an address to a Women's Guild in New Jersey, Her Excellence said "The forces of tradition in tribal society are not



Mrs. Mai Padmore

ALL PUBLIC LANDS of cities, counties, states, and federal government belong to the people. We are the people, and these public lands are our property. We, the people, own the cities, the states and the nation. We also own all public structures, facilities and services. We are responsible for the properties we own. We must maintain, improve, and, when necessary, we must rebuild and expand our public structures, our facilities and our services.

The City of Las Vegas is the property of the people. We, the people, have grown in numbers much faster than our city has grown in services and facilities. It behooves us to do whatever must be done to make our city meet our needs. Whatever the cost might be, we must each share in it, for it is our joint obligation to ourselves.

Las Vegas has experienced a population growth that has exceeded manyfold the calculations of planning experts. We have passed the 100,000 mark, a population that was not expected before 1972. We have possibly reached the growth predicted by our 1959 Master Plan for the year 1975. We, the people, are approximately ten years ahead of the Master Plan time table, while our public facilities lag ten years behind.

Public facilities must accelerate in growth rate to catch up with the population, or the population must mark time until its

nearly so conservative, nor as inflexible as they once were. In my own country there have been instances of women becoming town chiefs, and even paramount chiefs.

"It is a mistake", Mme. Padmore added, "to assume that African women receive no formal education in their tribal societies. For centuries the young girls of the hinterland tribes have been given systematic training for womanhood and for citizenship in the Sande (Gri Gri) Society. Although the Sande training is highly secretive, there is nothing sinister about its activities, which include instructions in folklore, physical education, arts and crafts."

Many of the false conceptions concerning the picture of African women have been created by the distorted chronicling of European colonials. These European writers have discarded the idea of "dowry" as applied in their own marital customs and have substituted the idea of "bride slaves", or "bride price" in the African marriage ceremony.

Mme. Padmore elaborated upon this distortion when she stated, "Your marriage ceremony calls for the presence of someone, usually the father, to give the bride away. In Africa this giving of the bride is done in return for payment of a sum of money by the bridegroom to the girl's family. This money is recoverable if the

needs are met. We can not hold the population at a standstill, but we can—and we must—increase the growth rate of our public services and facilities. The cost of catching up is far more than we have in our public funds. We must borrow the money to do the job now and pay later, exactly in the same manner we buy our homes, automobiles and all other things that cost more than the family cookie jar contains.

AMERICA HAS MADE fantastic success of the "buy now and pay later" program. Every family in our country has bought something on this plan. The City of Las Vegas must put the same type of time payment plan to use in order to provide its people with certain absolute necessities for continued growth and stable economy. Since the city belongs to the people, we, the people, must give our approval to the contract. We MUST GO TO THE POLLS ON APRIL 7 and VOTE "YES" on ALL SIX ISSUES ON THE BALLOT.

A "YES" VOTE ON EACH ISSUE WILL BE INSURANCE FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR OURSELVES AND FOR OUR CHILDREN.

DON'T DEPEND ON OTHER VOTERS TO PROTECT YOUR FUTURE. GO TO THE POLLS AND VOTE YOURSELF. VOTE "YES" APRIL 7.

PEOPLE MUST PAY FOR PROGRESS.

bride misbehaves. In other words, the transaction is intended to clothe the wedding contract with legality, and to establish stable relations between the two parties. It is really the European dowry in reverse."

Mme. Padmore's native country, Liberia, has pioneered in the emancipation of women. Their emancipation is as complete in every sense of the word as it is in America. In Liberia there are women who are listed among the leaders of the nation, holding positions as mayors, councillors, jurors, cabinet and subcabinet ministers, consuls and secretaries in overseas embassies, post masters, paramount chiefs and other high positions.

African women with formal education have reached high position in the civil service. Even those without benefit of education have gone into business such as farming and trading, and some of these have become moderately wealthy.

Full emancipation of women in certain African customs has been attended by the same problems of progress that America has experienced.

The emergence of African women as equals has created a constantly expanding sense of independence among them. This independence has weakened family ties which in primitive African society were invulnerable. The resulting loss of maternal