

# *New Glamour Girl In Congress Backs Equality For All Races*



**HELEN GAHAGAN DOUGLAS**

Representative from the 14th Congressional District, Los Angeles, Calif.

## By VENICE T. SPRAGGS

(Defender Washington Bureau)

WASHINGTON.—The cause of liberalism on Capital Hill won a new champion the day Los Angeles' east side sent charming and intelligent Helen Gahagan Douglas to Congress.

Coming from a virtual racial melting pot which embraces "Little Tokyo," she represents a district made up of Mexicans, Negroes, Italians, Jewish, Japanese and Greeks.

Perhaps the closest rival to her infectious charm is her dead earnestness and sincere determination to "call 'em as she sees 'em" and that to her means to stand firmly for equality for all Americans.

Dramatically declaring, "I made no appeals to any special groups when I was campaigning. I, therefore, am not bound by any special promises to any group. I gave my promise for a program which I shall work to apply to all alike."

### "Insult" to Group

"I think it is an insult to any group to single them out and say I will do this for you. Trying to meet the needs of groups separately only perpetuates a problem of segregation we are fighting to eliminate in America."

I had gone in to see Mrs. Douglas to get her views on a number of problems close to the heart of Negroes. Her office, like that of other freshmen congressmen, was in the process of getting settled for the months ahead, but at that, running smoothly. She was out to a conference, I was told, but would return shortly.

Waiting for only a few minutes, she came in from a California

state caucus, glowing. I later learned this was due to her having just been unanimously nominated by her state group for consideration to membership on the prized House Foreign Affairs committee.

She wore a black crepe suit dress with fuschia python bands on the lapels of the coat held by square sapphire-jeweled buttons, which enhanced her brunette beauty. Her greeting was warm and cordial.

### Blasts Rankin

A huge basket of white chrysanthemums and pink snap dragons posing on her window sill somehow did not match her vibrant personality. They were a gift from a well-wisher.

Almost spontaneously she began to describe her personal feelings on the passage of the Rankin resolution to make the Dies un-American Activities committee permanent. "For a moment," she said, "I lost all my composure, almost my breath." Continuing, she said, "When I heard the former work of the committee praised, I felt as though the bottom would drop out of my stomach."

She opined that perhaps it would result in a great awakening of the people to their responsibility for the people they elect, and that its passage, like that of the Smith-Connally bill, might have unexpected results in another direction.

She lauded the statement made by Rep. Charles LaFollette (R., Ind.), in retaliation to the supporters of the resolution when he said before starting out on another "witch hunt" supporters of the amendment might first eliminate

such un-American activities as, "stealing of elections, the maintenance of monopolies, discrimination against economic opportunities and the maintenance of the poll tax."

She averred, "He put it better than anybody else could have put it."

On legislation for a permanent Fair Employment Practice Committee, she said, "I want to make a ringing statement, when the bill is heard."

I discussed the growing concern in some quarters that the return of the Japanese from relocation centers to the West Coast would probably result in ousting Negro war workers from the "Little Tokyo" section, and because of restrictions in Los Angeles, housing facilities would be difficult if not impossible to find.

She said that as far as she knew that no problem had been created in that section as yet, but she would look into the matter immediately. Just a few days before coming East, she said, she went through the entire district with a health officer, giving particular concern to the health, housing and recreation needs. Rents are terrific in the section, she confided.

On compulsory military training, she thought whatever is needed to win the war and the peace will have to serve as the determinant—and she certainly favored whatever measures necessary.

The extension of full franchise to all Americans has her full support, for she is definitely convinced that through this medium many unfavorable elements in government can be removed, and

a full democracy more nearly achieved.

"The world has shrunk," she very soberly stated, "and we must all get along together or we are all going to perish. We've got to exercise greater self-discipline and a spirit of give and take within ourselves. Our problem is not so much one of externals as it is to remake ourselves. We are going to have to get along or we are going to condemn this civilization to chaos and destruction."

There were no illusions as to where Helen Gahagan Douglas stands, and those who are spending time trying to put her into a fencing position with Rep. Clare Booth Luce may well look to a more hopeful task, as it takes no mystic to foresee that Mrs. Douglas is in Washington for business—the business of representing to the utmost of her ability the needs of the people who sent her to Congress, and the needs of her country.

Mrs. Douglas hails from Brooklyn, N. Y. She is the wife of the movie star, Major Melvyn Douglas. A singer of note, she made her debut on Broadway.

During a concert tour in Europe around the middle 30's she became so incensed with Hitler and his Nazi regime, she broke her contract and returned home. What she saw of Nazism made her resolve to enter public life to combat its spread.

She migrated to Hollywood, where she became national committeewoman from California. She is the mother of two children, a daughter, 6, and a son, 11.