

Are AFL-CIO efforts confined to legislation?

Not at all. There must also be a complementary effort to bring about community action, through bi-racial committees, to eradicate all discrimination, whether in the bus depot or the classroom. As noted earlier, the drive for civil rights will succeed only when it has enlisted a consensus of the American people—as we believe it now has.

Throughout America the AFL-CIO, with its 130 national and international unions, its nearly 900 state and local central bodies and the 60,000 local unions which are the basic units in the labor movement's structure, is helping to mobilize this kind of consensus. What is said in Washington has little meaning unless it is given direct application in the community.

It is the responsibility of the AFL-CIO Civil Rights Department to coordinate with civil rights representatives in central labor bodies and in international unions on specific projects and long-range programs. In each community, unions are urged to carry out vigorous civil rights programs of their own and expand on these through their central labor bodies and civil rights-minded organizations.

To make sure this is done, special AFL-CIO task forces have been created to stimulate action in major metropolitan centers. The task forces confer with local labor leadership and non-labor civil rights organizations, and help them to plan closer coordination with local church, fraternal and public leaders.

What is being done inside unions?

In all AFL-CIO unions, every member is equal, and enjoys all the rights enjoyed by any other member.

This alone is not enough, of course, and unions have long been aware of it. To be a union member a worker must first be hired; and therefore discrimination in hiring must be forbidden by law. Unions have fought for years to negotiate non-discrimination clauses covering hiring, wage rates and upgrading; such agreements are operative in every geographical area, and their numbers increase yearly. But these efforts must be reinforced by federal statute.

In scores of plants throughout the south, once-separate Negro and white locals have been merged and seniority lists consolidated. There is no color line in the benefits provided by union contracts. Union meetings and the facilities in union halls are generally unsegregated, often in defiance of local custom and even local law.

Major unions that have apprenticeship programs forbid discrimination both by constitution and contracts. Some now offer schooling to help Negroes and others with sub-standard educations to catch up and be better able to meet apprenticeship requirements.

The AFL-CIO has forbidden its own subsidiary organizations and departments to hold meetings, conventions or conferences in segregated facilities. This ruling is binding on state and local central bodies, COPE area