

What has been accomplished?

In the perspective of history the progress over the last two decades has been tremendous. Some triumphs have been dramatic; the unforgettable day of the Supreme Court decision on school segregation was one example; the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was another.

And during all this time, labor-supported (and often labor-initiated) measures have been enacted by states and municipalities, with painful and painstaking effort, so that today there are 25 states and scores of cities with fair employment practices laws, and dozens that outlaw discrimination in housing and public accommodations. Meanwhile, beyond the statute books, innumerable communities have quietly obliterated the influence of anti-catholicism, anti-semitism and Jim Crow.

Yes, in the last 20 years—against the background of the previous 80—the gains have been spectacular. But quite properly we of the AFL-CIO look, not to history, but to the here and now. A new law has been enacted, at long last, which represents a comprehensive breakthrough in civil rights on almost every front. But the law is a beginning, not the end. It asserts rights; it does not give them day-to-day reality. The law's success is in the hands of the people.

What does the AFL-CIO intend to do now?

Immediately after the civil rights bill was signed into law, the AFL-CIO started work on a program to insure its full effectiveness. The basic elements of this program include the following:

☆ EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Utmost efforts will be exerted to achieve voluntary compliance with this section of the law before it takes official effect in July 1965. Employment rights are, of course, a major concern of unions. But it is an indisputable fact that unions do not control employment—employers do.

Nevertheless, unions can and will—in both organized and unorganized establishments—make a significant contribution to the achievement of voluntary compliance with this section of the law, Title 7.

Our objective in the AFL-CIO is to achieve the spirit and intent of the law now, not months from now. So particular attention must be paid to the voluntary institution of fair employment practices.

Non-discrimination clauses have been negotiated in many union contracts and have been enforced through contract grievance procedure. All affiliated AFL-CIO unions are again urged to step up their efforts in this direction. But unorganized companies