One month ago the Civil Rights Act of 1964 became the law of the land. That historic event, so long awaited, marked the beginning of a new struggle to translate the rights thus confirmed by Congress into living reality in every phase of American life.

This new struggle will demand even greater dedication, even closer unity, even harder work and even more patience than the legislative effort itself. To that end the AFL-CIO pledges its unremitting efforts.

A first requisite is to keep in being the spirit of unity in the ranks of civil rights supporters, in which the AFL-CIO proudly served, and to enlist new adherents to this cause.

There are many organizations—civic, business and professional—which over the last year and a half have either been in opposition to certain aspects of civil rights legislation or have stood aloof from the struggle. Now the circumstances have changed. The issue today is not whether there should be a civil rights law, or what it should embrace, but rather its orderly implementation. Therefore the time has come for participation in civil rights affairs of organizations which have not participated up to now.

All these, and law-abiding citizens everywhere, should be drawn into a drive to make the national consensus a national reality. It is true, and properly so, that behind this new Bill of Rights for America there stands the enforcement powers of the fedeal government, and those powers should be fully applied. Yet to be truly effective, to fulfill its high aspirations, the Civil Rights Act must rely upon the goodwill of friends and neighbors in every community in our land.

In all of this the labor movement has a special obligation, as the AFL-CIO has long recognized.

That obligation is especially keen with respect to Title 7 of the law, relating to equal employment opportunities.

The record confirms beyond dispute that the labor movement—AFL and CIO separately, and the AFL-CIO since merger—has, since World War II, been the major advocate of equal employment opportunities legislation, applicable to unions and employers alike.

The law as written delays enforcement of equal employment opportunities for a year. The AFL-CIO cannot and will not wait on the letter of the law; the spirit of the law looks to voluntary compliance and so do we.

Therefore we hereby call a national conference of union leaders, including the officers of national and international unions, of state central bodies and of such local central bodies as shall be designated by the president of the AFL-CIO, to meet in Washington, D. C. on September 2, at a time and place to be designated by the president.

This conference will be charged with the responsibility for formulating and planning the implementation of the following measures, among others:

1. The education of union members and other citizens as to the actual terms of the Civil Rights Act. The Departments of Civil Rights, Legislation, Education, Public Relations, Community Services, and Publications, are instructed to draw up a program, with the assistance of their colleagues in the affiliated unions, to make sure all union officials and members understand the facts of the law and their meaning. All departments of the AFL-CIO and its regional directors are instructed to see to it that such a program of education is effectuated.

2. The work that has been carried on by AFL-CIO community task forces is to be greatly broadened. Achievement of equal opportunity in our schools, in all public facilities and in all places of public accommodation is a cause on which all elements in our communities must and should unite. The state and city central bodies of the AFL-CIO can make a significant contribution to this work, operating through community-wide committees with religious, civic and civil rights organizations.

3. As we noted above, promotion of equal opportunity in employment is a major concern of unions. Unions, of course, do not control employment. But unions can—in both organized and unorganized companies—make a significant contribution to achieving voluntary compliance with this section of the law long before the effective date of Title 7. Therefore, particular attention will be given to the voluntary achievement of fair employment practices, among organized and unorganized employers alike. Non-discrimination clauses have been negotiated in many union contracts and have been enforced through contract grievance procedure. All AFL-CIO unions are again urged to step up their efforts along these lines. But the unorganized companies must not be allowed to evade their responsibilities. Careful note will be kept of the employers who comply with the principles of the law, and of those who do not. The latter should clearly be the focus of enforcement.

4. The AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions will insist upon adequate funds and vigorous administration of the Civil Rights Act. We will not allow the act to be emasculated by lack of funds, a back-door attack which has hobbled so many social measures in the past. This must not be the fate of the greatest social advance in a century.