GUARANTEE CIVIL RIGHTS

I. WHY THE NEED?

The historic Supreme Court decision on school desegregation has passed its fifth birthday. As of last year, only 400,000 Negro children of nearly 3 million in 17 Southern and border states and the District of Columbia are in districts where some desegregation has been at least started. Almost three quarters of this total are in Missouri, Maryland and the District of Columbia. Nearly 10 million Negro and white children are in school districts that have made no beginning towards desegregation. The failure of the Congress and the Executive Branch to act in an effective manner has in addition brought the "shame of Little Rock" and also the closing of schools and loss of school days for many of our nation's youths in other areas.

Willful defiance of the law of the land has led to serious disrespect of law and order and even serious breakdown, as evidenced by hate bombings and other violence.

Progress that has been made has almost solely been due to the tenacious adherence of the Federal Judiciary to the constitutional concept of equal justice and equal opportunity for all Americans. The whole burden of this court fight has been carried by private citizens and organizations. Increasingly there have been legal pressures to forestall and prevent adequate representation in the courts. With a full array of state power ranged against individuals and organizations who seek to assert their constitutional rights, the contest is an uneven one. Nearly five years after the Court decision, progress towards compliance with the Constitution is so slow as to turn hope to despair.

The Civil Rights Act of 1957, although it was a victory, being the first Congressional action in over 80 years, has been—as predicted—hopelessly inadequate. Its principal weakness was the elimination from the original bill of Title III which would have given the Justice Department the clear right to seek civil injunctions to compel adherence to court orders in segregation cases. In the meantime, the hope that this law would achieve substantial progress in limiting discrimination in voting rights has not been realized. The President's Commission on Civil Rights has found widespread violation of basic voting rights and has recommended new legislative measures as being necessary to secure such rights.

Failure to guarantee basic democratic rights is injurious to the nation's education standards and general welfare. As President Meany said recently: "It is no mere coincidence that the last anti-Negro stronghold in America is likewise the last anti-union stronghold. . . . Thus, labor and the Negroes not only have common cause—we have common enemies as well . Those enemies are aligned against human progress. . . . They are working, perhaps without realizing it, to weaken and stultify their country. Their program is for all practical purposes un-American."

II. WHAT LEGISLATION IS NEEDED?

1. Clearly stated Congressional support for school desegregation decisions.
2. Authority for the Attorney General to institute law suits to obtain compliance (similar to Part III deleted from 1957 Act).
3. Technical and financial assistance for school facilities and operations to facilitate desegregation and where states withhold funds.
4. Federal legislation aimed at preventing hate bombings and other violence, and at apprehending those guilty for such actions.