

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; this is why a legal ban on discriminatory hiring has been an AFL-CIO goal for so many years. But in the meantime, unions have fought to negotiate non-discrimination clauses covering hiring, wage rates and upgrading; such agreements are operative in every geographical area, and their numbers increase yearly. This process will soon be reinforced by law, and properly so; and it is being reinforced today by the application of AFL-CIO policy.

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, con-

ventions or conferences in segregated facilities. This ruling is binding on state and local central bodies, COPE area conferences, educational institutes and all other functions directly under AFL-CIO control.

All this is not meant to suggest that unions are blameless. There was even a time when discrimination was "respectable" in some national unions as it was in most of America. But today, as George Meany has expressed it, discrimination in the trade union movement is a "bootleg product," sneaked in by the back door and nowhere condoned.

In the labor movement even a little discrimination is too much. To the AFL-CIO the important consideration is not how much has been accomplished but what remains to be done.

Is there AFL-CIO machinery for handling civil rights grievances?

Yes, and not just on paper. The AFL-CIO Civil Right Committee, headed by the federation's second ranking officer, is charged with the obligation of carrying out the uncompromising declarations of the AFL-CIO conventions.

A special subcommittee on compliance hears, investigates and acts upon all complaints. It utilizes the staff