

Labor and

equal

rights

This booklet contains the text of the Resolution on Civil Rights adopted by the Seventh AFL-CIO Convention at Bal Harbour, Fla., Dec. 7-12, 1967 and an address by AFL-CIO Vice President A. Philip Randolph in support of the resolution.

Civil Rights

Since the last AFL-CIO Convention, progress has continued to be made in the efforts to abolish discrimination and segregation on the basis of race, creed, color or national origin, but the trade union goal of a society free from discrimination and deprivation is still far down the road.

Indeed, while the nation continues to make progress in accommodations, voting education, employment and justice, there are more complex and difficult problems to the achieving of equal opportunity for minority group citizens, in the North as well as in the South.

Expectations had been raised that with the reduction of discriminatory barriers our minority group citizens would move up the economic ladder into the mainstream of American life at a faster pace than before. For many this has happened, but many others have fallen farther behind. Unemployment rates among minority group citizens remain double the national average and among minority group youths in our major urban city ghettos, unemployment rates are of the catastrophic proportions of 20 to 30 percent.

The resulting frustration in addition to the increasing crisis-proportion problems in America's cities has contributed to both riots and backlash which interact on each other and in turn make more difficult the solution of the problems.

And there are those misdirected intellectuals and so-called "civil rights militants" who have abandoned the struggle for equality to embrace a regressive and self-defeating racial and cultural nationalism. Their pursuit of an easy answer to the problems of 300 years of inequality by greater inequality can lead only to frustration. Such acts can serve only to comfort the bigots and segregationists, as well as those who would use the civil rights movement for their own opportunity. Despite the difficulty of the task and the increasing complexities of the struggle in the heat and passion of recent events, the AFL-CIO renews its determination and commitment to achieve full equality in America in all aspects of life—employment, education, housing, public accommodations and justice.

Equal Administration Of Justice

The 1965 AFL-CIO Convention resolution on civil rights noted that southern juries had convicted whites for crimes against

Negroes for the first time, but that murderers of Negroes and civil rights workers remained unpunished.

We can note two years later that a Mississippi jury has convicted, for violation of a federal law, some of those charged with the murder of two white and one Negro civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, and that this is indicative of a general improvement in the application of the law across the board.

As trade unionists we reiterate our stand that the administration of justice on an equal basis for all citizens is fundamental in a democratic society. There is still need for new legislation to guarantee the elimination of discrimination in the jury system and the protection of those who are working for the implementation of those laws already on the books.

Voting

In the six states that were covered by the Voting Rights Act (Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia), Negro registration rose from 856,000 in 1965 to 1,493,000 in 1967. The percentage of voting age Negroes who registered went from 30.2 percent to 52.6 percent.

Significant improvement was made in each of the six states. Mississippi, which had the greatest percentage increase from 8.3 to 47.1 percent of voting age Negroes registered, remained the only one of the six under the 50 percent mark.

A significant contribution to this increase in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama was made by federal examiners appointed by the Justice Department.

There is much more that has to be done in the area of voter registration. A good deal of credit must go to the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council and to the voluntary efforts of groups with which they work. Contributions have also been made by the AFL-CIO state federations in the South.

Tangible results of this increased registration are already apparent. Negro citizens have been elected to office across the South as state legislators, city counselors, sheriffs and other officials. Georgia now has two Negro state senators and nine Negro members of the state House of Representatives. In 1966 the first Negro since Reconstruction was elected to the Mississippi State legislature. We take note also of the election of Negro mayors in Gary and Cleveland.

However, the potential of this democratization of the ballot has yet to be fully realized. It is our hope that the increased opportunity for voting would be further utilized and that its result will be the election of more forward-looking and liberal representatives of all races, voting in the interest of the majority of people in the South and in the country.

Public Accommodations

The area in which the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has helped achieve the most complete results is that of public accommodations.

In most localities, there is no longer a problem of obtaining accommodations on an equal and integrated basis in meeting places, hotels, restaurants and other public facilities. But so long as there remains an instance where Americans cannot gather in a public meeting place because of racial discrimination or so long as an individual American is unable to buy a meal or buy a place to sleep or to utilize a public facility because of racial discrimination, this problem remains and requires vigorous attention.

Education

The rate by which separate school systems in the South are being eliminated is accelerating, but an overwhelming majority of Negro children are still in separate Negro schools. Meanwhile, because of discrimination in housing, lack of quality education in the city schools themselves, and other problems in our urban ghettos, de facto school segregation has been intensified in many cities.

Deliberate school segregation and de facto school segregation both perpetuate the separate and unequal education of millions of American children. Thus a major flaw in our nation's internal strength is transmitted, like a virus, into the decades ahead and into the adult citizens of tomorrow. With painful slowness separate school systems are being eliminated, but the problem of de facto school segregation will require even greater efforts to eliminate. De facto school segregation is a complex moral and economic problem that has no simple solution. Men of good will and faith will have to work together to find the new answers that must be found. Our nation's failure to give meaningful efforts to the solution of this problem adds further potential explosiveness to our already troubled cities.

The AFL-CIO reaffirms its stand that the federal government should authorize a special multi-billion dollar school fund to aid our cities and our children in all areas of the nation in attaining equality in education.

Housing

Our nation has made less progress in achieving equal opportunity in the sale and rental of housing than in any other field of civil rights endeavor. Despite repeated efforts by church, non-profit groups, labor and government, housing remains the single most important factor that affects de facto school segregation problems, anti-poverty efforts, hard core unemployment and scores of other related problems. Indeed, housing is at the heart of America's urban crisis.

The demon here is the spectre of real estate block-busting, of expanding ghettos and of potential slums in the minds of Americans whose life savings and labor are represented in their homes. However, it is a fact, proved by surveys and by scores of union-sponsored housing and apartment enterprises, that real estate values do not decline when a minority group family moves into a previously all-white neighborhood. All evidence indicates over a long-range period that a home-owner's equity is not affected and his home's value does not decline. Unavailability of decent housing for non-white Americans—regardless of ability to pay—has perpetuated the stereotype of the slum-living Negro and other non-whites. Necessary is a larger volume of housing, freely available as to quantity, quality and location—not abandoned and worn-out housing that is soon to deteriorate into slums and thus further perpetuate the housing myth. Special efforts must also be made to provide adequate low-income and middle-income housing of a variety that reflects all the needs of our society. Fair housing ordinances and laws, where enacted, are beginnings toward solution of this problem. We in organized labor therefore reaffirm our support and dedicate our efforts to seek enactment of a federal fair housing law.

Employment

Good jobs at any pay are foundation stones in the edifice of equal opportunity. Great strides have been made in changing the employment practices in many industries in all parts of the country.

The establishment of a national Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has helped to accelerate this process. Although there is still a significant amount of overt discrimination in the employment field, other factors are part of the reasons why tens of thousands of minority group workers, young and old, still suffer unemployment and under-employment.

In the present labor market, changing rapidly under the impact of the technological revolution, achievement of non-discrimination is not the sole goal. Essential strands in the fabric of equal opportunity include information about jobs, training, education to qualify for jobs, and proper means of transportation to the employment site.

Apprenticeship

The question of minority group participation in skilled trades apprenticeship is an example. Although the number of apprenticeship openings is too small to have a major impact on the national rate of minority group youth unemployment, it is an important area.

Professor F. Ray Marshall and Vernon M. Briggs in a study prepared for the Department of Labor entitled "Negro Participa-

tion in Apprenticeship Programs" concluded: "Although racial discrimination continues to be an important problem, we are convinced that its relative importance has declined in recent years and that measures to recruit, train and counsel qualified apprentices currently are much more important."

The AFL-CIO Civil Rights Department, with the cooperation of the Department of Labor, the Building and Construction Trades Department and Building Trades Councils throughout the country, have concentrated their efforts in working with the Joint Apprenticeship Committee (Workers Defense League—A. Philip Randolph Education Foundation), the Urban League's Labor Education Advancement Program (LEAP), the Trade Union Leadership Council, the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) and other groups. All of these have developed programs for recruiting, tutoring and counseling apprentices who qualify in meeting existing standards for apprenticeship programs. The U.S. Labor Department has already made grants to programs of these kinds in 16 cities. The AFL-CIO endorses these programs and recommends that they be studied and emulated in other cities.

Special manpower and education programs can serve similarly on a wider range of jobs in a much larger segment of the labor force.

While the efforts of government and government-sponsored programs in the area of non-discrimination and affirmative action programs should be vigorous in their implementation, they should also be intelligent. Employment opportunities for minority groups must be intensified without tearing the fabric of union security for all workers. Simplistic racial quota approaches are not an answer to "fair and full employment."

All national officers assigned by their international unions to the area of equal opportunity are again urged to give prompt attention to the processing of complaints with government agencies, to call upon the AFL-CIO Civil Rights Department for aid and assistance, and to cooperate with sound affirmative programs.

All government agencies involved are also asked in turn to intensify their efforts to resolve these problems as far as possible in the process of conciliation. The sanctions of the law have to be used where all conciliation fails.

It is satisfying to note the efforts of the AFL-CIO Civil Rights Department, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, its labor liaison section and its regional offices which are engaged in a series of conferences on Title VII and collective bargaining for both local union officials and the staffs of the Commission.

We reiterate our call upon those affiliates with the few segregated locals that remain in existence to continue work on merging such separate locals and to adopt contractual clauses that will eliminate barriers to equal opportunity in promotion for all workers.

We also reiterate our call on all affiliates to develop and accelerate programs to eliminate discriminatory practices within their industries and unions, utilizing and strengthening established machinery of collective bargaining by:

(1) Negotiating non-discrimination clauses in all collective bargaining contracts and utilizing these clauses in all stages of the collective bargaining procedure;

(2) Sensitizing the collective bargaining machinery to the problems of eliminating discrimination and providing equal employment; and

(3) Cooperating in sound affirmative action programs in the areas of retraining information and recruiting which will expand opportunities for those previously deprived.

Spanish-Speaking Americans

While the American Negro (numbering 21.5 million, 10.9 percent of the total population) makes up the largest single minority group which still faces discrimination and the fallout of past discrimination, there are other minorities who face many of the same problems.

Spanish-speaking Americans in the United States, of whom Americans of Mexican descent are the largest group, total approximately six million. Of these, over five million are Mexican Americans, over 600,000 are Puerto Ricans on the mainland and almost 200,000 are Cuban refugees.

In addition, there are some 600,000 Indians, about 500,000 Japanese Americans and almost 250,000 Chinese Americans.

The Spanish-speaking minority, like the American Negro, has a disproportionate number of those unemployed, undereducated and below the poverty level in income. This is true both in rural areas where large numbers are engaged in agricultural labor and in urban areas where large numbers live in city slum ghettos.

At the end of October this year, the Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican American Affairs held a series of hearings in El Paso, Texas, to study the problems and complaints of Spanish-speaking citizens in regard to both discrimination and deprivation and the proposed answers for them.

Representatives of the labor movement in the five southwest-

ern states as well as from the Organization and Civil Rights Departments of the AFL-CIO participated in these hearings.

From these hearings can come solutions to the glaring deficiencies that exist in regard to opportunities in these areas—both for union organization and improved government policy in regard to labor standards, equal opportunity and housing.

Conclusion

The struggle for civil rights, which has been intensively waged as a national endeavor for less than two decades, cannot overcome without great tribulation and pain the centuries of brutal slavery, discrimination and inequality. However, in this short period of time, great progress has been made through the efforts of government and voluntary organizations. Organized labor is particularly proud of the role it has played and the accomplishments it has helped to attain in this struggle. Many major problems of civil rights remain; additional problems have arisen and will continue to arise, but there is no question as to the role we must play and no question as to the eventual victory of this cause.

We in organized labor repeat and reiterate our unending support to the attainment of equality of opportunity for all in this nation.

Our goal is true and absolute equality of opportunity throughout America. We shall not rest until we achieve it.

A. Philip Randolph
on the
Civil Rights Resolution

As a statement of labor's goals, the resolution is comprehensive in scope; as a reaffirmation of labor's commitment to equal rights, it is vigorous and compelling.

In supporting this resolution, President Meany, I want also to thank and congratulate you for the firm stand that you have taken, as spokesman for the AFL-CIO, on behalf of civil rights.

As we all know, resolutions are mere words. To translate these words into action requires strong leadership. That leadership has been exercised, President Meany, by you and by Brother Schnitzler, who has presided ably and diligently over the Civil Rights Committee of the AFL-CIO.

Let me also commend the work of our Civil Rights Department and its dynamic and ever-busy director, Donald Slaiman. Those of us who have battled for years to eliminate discrimination in the labor movement, and to strengthen the bonds between labor and the minority groups, have found in Brother Slaiman and his colleagues valuable friends and allies. And were it not for the tremendous know-how and dedication of the director of our Legislative Department, Andrew Biemiller, we might never have won the legislative victories of recent years.

It is no secret, brothers and sisters, that since our last convention, the civil rights movement has come upon difficult times. A good many white liberal friends who only yesterday were denouncing the labor movement for dragging its feet have since withdrawn their active support. People who only yesterday proclaimed that the nation's number one problems were civil rights and poverty, have since transferred their energies and their finances to other causes, especially the so-called peace movement.

The effect of their abandonment of our cause is to fasten upon the neck of the poor—Negroes, Mexican-Americans and whites alike—the burden of the Viet Nam war. Like the reactionaries in Congress, like the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition, these former liberal allies would tell us that no progress can be made at home until the war in Viet Nam is ended. But we cannot wait for the war in Viet Nam to end. Time is running out in our cities. The voices of frustration, discontent and hatred grow shrill. We must act now.

White middle-class liberals are not the only people who are abandoning our ship. In the Negro community you will also find alienated youth who disguise their withdrawal and retreat from struggle in the language of false militancy. They have turned their backs on the needs of the black and white poor to nourish their own ideological and emotional estrangement from American life.

Thus, in recent days, I have been appalled and saddened by the statement attributed to Stokely Carmichael in Paris that he and his friends favor, not peace in Viet Nam, but the military defeat of American soldiers by Hanoi and the Vietcong. And whose bodies would be sacrificed on the altar of his arrogant and violent alienation? Not just white bodies, but the bodies of tens of thousands of black boys who each day meet their commitment with courage and honor and glory. For them, like their brothers and sisters at home, there is no easy way out. They cannot tour the capitals of Europe and Asia, wined and dined and feted by Communist governments and parties. They must remain here, struggling each hour to improve their lots against difficult conditions. And as they struggle, brothers and sisters, it is not to the Stokely Carmichaels—not to the absentee demagogues, in body or spirit—that they must look for allies, but to the labor movement.

For the labor movement understands the needs of the poor man and the working man. The AFL-CIO has demonstrated this understanding by its support of the "Freedom Budget for All Americans." This 10-year program for the elimination of poverty and slums through full employment will do more to bring the black and white poor into the mainstream of American life than all the speeches and all the demonstrations in the world.

President Meany, I am deeply grateful to you and to members of the AFL-CIO staff, particularly our Research Director, Nathaniel Goldfinger, for your great help in the preparation and promulgation of this historic Freedom Budget. And I commend this convention for passing Resolution Number 112, endorsing the broad outlines of the Freedom Budget.

Labor's support of the Freedom Budget demonstrates once more that labor is in the forefront of the movement for democratic social change. It reflects our recognition, rooted in long and deep experience, that social problems cannot be solved by attacking their symptoms. We must eliminate their causes.

There are those who would use the violent and riotous behavior of a few as a weapon against the many. These vindictive and cruel voices declare that rioting must not be "rewarded." They demand a halt to the already inadequate programs to aid the poor in our cities.

I agree that rioting must not be rewarded. It must be stopped.

But how? Surely the program of the reactionaries—to further deprive the deprived—would further fan the flames of destructive discontent.

Violence and disorder in the streets are but effects of a basic cause. That cause, brothers and sisters, is racial and social injustice. Now, we cannot have racial and social justice except in the framework of civil order. But it is impossible to secure and maintain civil order except upon the basis of justice. Labor's economic program, which parallels the objectives of the Freedom Budget, strikes at the heart of this cycle. It not only arouses hope of a better future—a hope now desperately lacking in many places—but provides the means to fulfill that hope.

Decades ago, brothers and sisters, an unusual man appeared on the American scene. He counseled Negroes to separate themselves from white America—psychologically, economically and even physically. He urged Negroes to think black and buy black. He called upon them to return to Africa. For the black man, he argued, life in America is hopeless; integration is neither possible nor desirable. The white man will never permit it.

That man's name was Marcus Garvey. He appeared after a long period in which the dreams and aspirations of the Negro had been dashed to pieces. As a result, he built a mass movement—perhaps the largest mass movement among Negroes in our history.

In these years, I was one of the few Negro leaders who openly opposed and challenged the Garvey movement. I argued that Garveyism was impractical, unrealistic, utopian, escapist, and racist in its philosophy—that it contained no real program for the mass of Negroes.

Many people at that time told me that I was foolish, that my arguments would fall on deaf ears, that Garveyism was the wave of the future. But the record of history has shown otherwise.

Today, in our own time, a new kind of Garveyism has emerged. This neo-Garveyism uses the slogan "Black Power," but it would lead to black impotence and defeat.

And today many people proclaim that this movement is the wave of the future. But once again, they will be proved wrong. Demagogues will always get a hearing in the despairing ghettos—but not for long.

As I opposed Marcus Garvey, so will I continue to oppose any movement that would substitute escape and withdrawal for democratic struggle. And in this effort, I am strengthened by the support of the labor movement.

Next year, the right wing forces will seek to capture the

White House. They will take advantage of the confusion over Viet Nam and the riots in our cities to further divide the progressive forces in our country that must work together for social and economic justice. There may be some defections from the liberal coalition. But the strong base of that coalition—as we have seen in the legislative history of the past five years—is in the alliance of the labor and Negro movements. That alliance must be strengthened in 1968. We must allow nothing to weaken it.

In the coming critical year, I know that especially heavy burdens will fall on the shoulders of our COPE Director, Al Barkan, and our Director of Education, Walter Davis. I want to thank them in advance for the great competence and skill that they will bring to their tasks.

Brothers and sisters, the resolution before you is a manifestation of the progress we have made and a guideline for our future progress. I urge its adoption by this convention.

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