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Our Concern for Civil Rights A TIME TO ACT

Future historians will look back on the summer of 1963 as "the great fight for civil rights." To the choruses of northern and southern sit-in groups and demonstrators, the pleas and warnings of political figures, the pronouncements of national organizations, and above all the historic March on Washington in late August, desire has been voiced for a final and decisive confrontation with racial justice in the country now. "It is a time to act," the President said, "in the congress, in state and local legislative bodies, and above all, in our daily lives."

Pleas and pronouncements do not make history, however. They become significant only as they become events, as they inspire action. And, while changes are already taking place so that the country will never be the same again, the first real test of whether the crisis for equality will be answered will come in the legislative struggle in Congress during the coming weeks. If historians pay heed to this summer at all, it will be due largely to what Congress does this fall.

What Congress does in the next few weeks will be determined to a great extent by what all of us back at home want it to do. Students as well as other citizens have an important role to play in this decision.

Because we feel that every student Association will want to study and take some action related to civil rights legislation we are sending to each President a copy of the special issue of COMMUNIQUE published by the National Student Christian Federation, which contains an analysis of proposed Civil Rights Legislation and suggested guide lines for action. We hope you will study this carefully and decide how you are going to involve your members in responding now!

Excerpts from a Memo from Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, September 27, 1963

The civil rights bill coming out of the House Subcommittee is so comprehensive that in spite of pitfalls ahead, it is hard not to feel a jubilant sense of victory. From now on, anyone who wants to see a strong measure pass this session of Congress should urge his Representative or Senator to vote for the bill approved by the House Judiciary Subcommittee #5. Approval (by the Subcommittee), to be sure, is still tentative. But there is little likelihood that any drastic changes will be made when the last votes are taken.

The above statement gives all Associations a clue about the way the Congress is responding to the need for new legislation in the field of civil rights.

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Other things your Association can do:

1. Work for fair housing programs on campus and in your community.

See Developing Open Communities by Morris Milgram, Association Press, 50¢ for programs of action in housing, and for program ideas and bibliography in many other aspects of human rights.

2. Sponsor voter education and registration programs in your community.
3. Develop tutorial programs for grammar school and high school students to help prevent school drop-outs.
4. Work for elimination of discrimination in employment and in all campus and community facilities.
5. Encourage your members to participate in non-violent direct action programs designed to:
 - a. Educate the public
 - b. Supplement inadequate news and information by mass media
 - c. Encourage communication across racial lines in the spirit of Christian brotherhood.

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