

ANNOUNCER: We present now, Mr. Walter P. Reuther, President of the UAW-CIO, and Mr. George F. Addes, Secretary-Treasurer, in a discussion of Michigan's need for fair employment practices legislation. Mr. Reuther...

REUTHER: George, I wonder how many residents of this state realize that Michigan, one of the foremost industrial states of the nation, is falling behind other states in the enactment of fair employment practices legislation.

ADDES: Walter, I think more residents of Michigan are waking up to this failure to enact a state FEPC law every day. They see New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts forging ahead in this vital field, and they are determined to do something about it.

REUTHER: And we can do something about it. In fact, the campaign to enact a Michigan FEPC law is already under way, and between now and the first of December every voter in Michigan will be mobilized in support of this essential law.

ADDES: You know, Walter, I personally have no doubt that this time a Michigan FEPC law will be passed - provided, of course, that everybody who claims to believe in fair play for all Americans is willing to do something about it, and not just talk.

REUTHER: That's right, George, and that brings us to an important question that we ought to discuss. If this campaign is to succeed, we are going to have to clear up a lot of confusion that surrounds this whole subject of discrimination. Many people who claim, as you say, that they believe in fair play, refuse to support FEPC legislation on the ground that you can't eliminate prejudice by passing a law.

ADDES: Yes, that's a tough hurdle to get over. And to get over it, we have to make a distinction between prejudice and discrimination. We have to point out that FEPC legislation is not aimed primarily at prejudice, but at discrimination.

REUTHER: Some of this confusion, of course, is deliberately created. The average American really believes in fair play; what's more, he realizes that you have to set up rules in order to get fair play throughout the game. If you clip a fellow in football, your team is penalized. Now, a ~~man's~~ ^{the} need for a job is a much more serious business, and there have to be rules for employment, too, ^{if we are to have} ~~to ensure~~ fair play.

ADDES: But as you say, Walter, what is really just a simple matter of fair play in employment is complicated by these irrelevant arguments. Nobody claims that you can eliminate prejudice by passing an FEPC law. What you can do is set up rules, rules which every American knows are fundamental in a democracy.

REUTHER: And we're not preaching something, George, that we don't practice right in the UAW-CIO. When the auto workers amended the union constitution at their last convention, ^{they} ~~and~~ set up a Fair Practices Department financed out of the dues paid by the membership. ^{They} were setting up rules for fair play and giving the union power to enforce those rules.

ADDES: And that's what Michigan needs - a law giving the state power to enforce the rules of fair play in employment. If a man has prejudices, and keeps those prejudices to himself, a law will not help. But when that man inflicts those prejudices on others, then the community has a duty to act,

and in a democracy the community acts through law.

REUTHER: ~~And while~~ ^T the Michigan FEPC law will be directed primarily against discrimination, ^{But} its passage will also help in the long-range fight against prejudice. In other words, only education in the long run can ~~kill~~ prejudice, but passage of an FEPC law is in itself a part of this educational process. *Destroy*

ADDES: That's true, Walter. It will educate the prejudiced man or woman by demonstrating to them that the majority of citizens mean business and are determined to prevent them from injuring others with their bigotry.

REUTHER: We have to move fast on this FEPC campaign. Not just because other states are far ahead of us, with FEPC laws in successful operation. But because the situation, right here in Michigan, is very serious. ① Take a specific case. A Negro veteran comes home. During the war, he risked his ~~neck~~ ^{life} for his country and for the survival of democracy. He applies for a job. He is qualified. But he doesn't get the job. Why? The color of his skin is against him. Multiply that story by several million, add up all that bitterness in the hearts of good Americans who believe they have been cheated out of their birthright, and you have trouble - trouble for this whole nation.

ADDES: That same story can be told of members of many minority groups. This is a nation of minorities. We are all members of minorities. We have to learn to live together, or democracy doesn't stand a chance, And we have to begin right in our own backyards, by setting up and enforcing ruling of fair play. Let's not confuse the issue by talking about education and about how you can't kill prejudice by passing a law.

That's beside the point. The only man who will be hurt by an FEPC law in Michigan is the man who discriminates in the specific matters of hiring and promoting and discharging workers. And the right to discriminate against a fellow-American is one right that no man can claim.

REUTHER: We can do this job, right here in Michigan, during the next month. The Committee for a State FEPC has been formed. This committee represents civic, religious, fraternal and labor organizations throughout the state. Between now and December 1, ~~between~~ 150,000 ~~and~~ 175,000 signatures of registered voters must be obtained on a petition ~~for a referendum vote on FEPC.~~ ^{which will} ~~force the MICHIGAN LEGISLATURE TO ACT on the pending~~ FEPC BILL. That is something specific and practical which every voter can do - sign his name to that petition.

ADDES: The State CIO Council will provide complete instructions to each CIO local union in the state regarding the legal requirements for circulating petitions.

REUTHER: ~~And~~ anyone who desires further information on the petition campaign can obtain it by ~~communicating with~~ ^{contacting} the Fair Practices and Anti-Discrimination Department, UAW-CIO, ^{at} 5701 Second Avenue, Detroit. This is a practical opportunity for all of us in Detroit and throughout Michigan to work together to advance democratic ideals in peace as we worked together to win the war. I recall that we had a little celebration ^{here} in town a few months ago, and the slogan used at that time included the phrase, "Coats off to the future". Well, this is it. This is a specific challenge to demonstrate that we meant what we said. Did we really mean it, or are we falling back into the same old rut for another fifty years? You can't build the future with the same old habits, the same old tools. A state FEPC is a new tool for future-building. Let's put it to work.

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