

**STATEMENT OF MSGR. GEORGE HIGGINS, DIRECTOR, SOCIAL ACTION
DEPARTMENT, NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE**

MONSIGNOR HIGGINS. I have a relatively brief prepared statement.

MR. PERKINS. Would you prefer to read it?

MONSIGNOR HIGGINS. I would.

MR. PERKINS. Proceed.

MONSIGNOR HIGGINS. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Msgr. George Higgins, director of the social action department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The National Catholic Welfare Conference is located at 1312 Massachusetts Avenue NW., Washington, D.C.

I appreciate this opportunity to address myself to H.R. 10440, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. I speak not only on behalf of the social action department, but also for the education department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the Bishop's Committee for Migrant Workers, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and the Bishop's Committee for the Spanish Speaking, all of which have an intense concern for the welfare of all citizens and particularly for those who are the victims of poverty and destitution.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 sets as its objective the elimination of "the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty." By means of mobilizing and energizing all resources, public and private, the act hopes to serve as a catalyst in providing opportunities for education, training and working experience for the economically and culturally deprived. Its spectrum of proposals is broad, directed to children, young adults, fathers and mothers of families; its range of projects extensive. One might fairly surmise, however, that there will be certain revisions and adaptations of H.R. 10440 as presently written.

This committee has at its disposal highly qualified specialists in the various categories of activities included in H.R. 10440. I will not presume, therefore, to offer a critique of the different titles and subsections of this bill. Rather, I prefer to reemphasize some of the basic principles that should undergird any program assisting the poor, for sound programs will endure only to the extent that they are based upon principle.

May I state first that organizations I represent today endorse the all-out war on poverty. The Catholic Church, as well as all other religious groups, has always been intensely interested in the plight of the poor. Its record speaks for itself. This endorsement is really the extension of the hand of welcome and encouragement to the Federal Government as it makes additional greater efforts to foster intelligent social action to counteract the causes of poverty. The dimensions of the problem of poverty far outstrip the resources of the churches and other private agencies and in some areas also outstrip the resources of local and State governments. The stimulus of the Federal Government is welcome, and indeed necessary.

The religious principles underlying a comprehensive attack on poverty have been clearly set forth in a statement issued by the social action department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference less than 2 months ago. With the permission of the Chair, I would submit this