

**STATEMENT OF RABBI RICHARD G. HIRSCH, UNION OF AMERICAN
HEBREW CONGREGATIONS**

Rabbi HIRSCH. Thank you very much. I am Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, director of the Religious Action Center of the American Hebrew Congregations.

In the interest of time, I don't think it is necessary for me to read the entire testimony.

Mr. PERKINS. Without objection, your testimony will be entered in the record at this point as though you did read it.

(The full statement follows:)

**TESTIMONY OF RABBI RICHARD G. HIRSCH, REPRESENTING THE COMMISSION ON
SOCIAL ACTION OF REFORM JUDAISM**

I am Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, director of the Religious Action Center, Union of American Hebrew Congregations. I appear in behalf of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, a joint instrumentality of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Other national agencies which are members of the commission on social action are the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, and the National Federation of Temple Youth.

In consonance with the policy positions taken by the organizations I represent, I come before you today to urge full support for H.R. 10440, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. In 1960 the Central Conference of American Rabbis called for a sustained attack upon all the social and economic conditions which make for poverty, stating that social progress is realized through concrete solutions of specific problems rather than by the adoption of any dogmatic and inflexible system. Our aim must be a social order which will provide the maximum of security, education, and wellbeing consistent with the liberty and dignity of the individual and his right of free choice.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, in November 1963, adopted a resolution which states in part: "America faces a serious moral problem in the continuing high rate of unemployment. * * * We heartily commend the local, State, and Federal Government programs designed to (a) train unskilled workers; (b) retrain workers who have been displaced by technological changes; and (c) develop a more extensive vocational guidance and training program. We urge that such programs be expanded."

Although our national organizations have not taken positions on the specific details of legislation before this committee, Judaism has formulated a position on the responsibilities of a society to its individual members. I speak to you from the perspective of that historical position.

The economic and social conditions which necessitate Government action to alleviate poverty have changed since Biblical times but the moral issues which motivate our concern have remained constant. The admonition of the Bible applies with remarkable pertinence to our day: "When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses to live in, and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered, beware lest your heart grow haughty and you forget the Lord your God, who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage * * * and you say to yourselves, 'My own power and the might of my hand have won this wealth for me.' Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you power to get wealth." (Deuteronomy 8: 11-18.)

Unfortunately, too many Americans have grown haughty and have forgotten that their personal wealth is not only the fruit of their own labors, but represents the accumulated wealth derived from the labors of countless generations of men. A recent Gallup poll, March 21, 1964, revealed that 54 percent of the American people believe that when a person is poor, it is because of "lack of effort on his own part." The concept that poverty is the result of indolence or lack of ability is deeply ingrained in the American psyche and is reflected throughout our history from Puritanism to Horatio Algerism.

The fundamental task confronting us today, therefore, is to reorient our own people to a recognition that poverty cannot be solved by individual action alone. We cannot vaccinate people against poverty by lining them up, as we did this