

I think in the interest of time we will submit our statement and ask that it be placed in the record, since you have it before you.

(The statement follows:)

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REV. LAROLD SCHULZ, CHAIRMAN, ANTIPOVERTY TASK FORCE, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST; RABBI RICHARD HIRSCH, DIRECTOR, RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER; AND GEORGE L. HAITHCOCK, DIRECTOR OF FIELD SERVICE, NATIONAL CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr. Chairman: We appear before you today as representatives of the Interreligious Committee Against Poverty. The organization which we represent was formed in January 1966 through the joint efforts of United States Catholic Conference (formerly the National Catholic Welfare Conference); the Synagogue Council of America and cooperating Jewish organizations; and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. The Interreligious Committee Against Poverty was formed for the purpose of rallying the full weight of major Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant groups in the war against poverty in all sections of the United States.

The Committee was established in recognition of the fact that the problem of poverty and its solution has been the concern of Judaism and Christianity through the ages. Deeply embedded in the religious heritage of each participating group are moral imperatives calling for the elimination of poverty.

Today as we appear before you our country is in the midst of deep crises. The events of recent weeks have at once underscored tragic realities of poverty and powerlessness even as they have made clear the need for immediate action which will wipe out the conditions which have created the unrest. Because of our mutual concern regarding the present situation, the Interreligious Committee Against Poverty formulated the following message to the President of the United States yesterday:

Dear Mr. President: We deplore the rioting which has resulted in the loss of human life and the destruction of property. However, it is vital that our nation respond to the deeper causes as well as to the symptoms of this agonizing unrest. America must not be diverted from fulfilling its promise. We reaffirm the philosophy and sound principles embodied in the "Great Society" programs. We hold that the minimum economic goal of the United States must be adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, education and social security for every individual and family.

We condemn not only the violence, but the economic and social conditions which are the seedbeds of violence. We recognize, as you have stated previously, that victory over poverty will take time, hard work, money, and perseverance. Poverty is a complex problem. There are no instant cures and no single set of remedies that can be a total answer.

However, let us begin now by strongly supporting and expanding the Economic Opportunity Act. Let us quickly pass other legislation now before the 90th Congress designed to ameliorate social and economic injustice. Let us seek full and adequate funding for these programs. Let us undertake immediate comprehensive action by government, with the assistance of the private sector, to move toward those goals which are desired by all compassionate and clear-thinking citizens. Let us dedicate ourselves to the creation of that equitable society which is the only real answer to social unrest and injustice.

Recently the Interreligious Committee Against Poverty (ICAP) published the attached pamphlet entitled *Poverty*. This pamphlet was distributed throughout the constituency of the Interreligious Committee as well as to leaders of government, including all members of Congress.

In the statement are these words:

"It is God's will that the dignity of each human person shall be respected and affirmed. Involuntary poverty, especially in a society of affluence undermines human dignity. To sanction or allow the continuation of such indignity is to diminish man's stature and to desecrate the image of God."

As one of the theological foundations of our concern, we further note that:

"God wills that the human community be characterized by justice and compassion. The poverty of one impoverishes all. The perpetuation of poverty in an economy of abundance violates man's responsibility both to compassion and to justice. It is evil in the sight of God."