

*W - Civil Rights*

FROM: Office of the Governor

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REMARKS BY GOVERNOR RICHARD J. HUGHES  
TO THE ANNUAL DINNER MEETING OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE IN NEW JERSEY  
GOVERNOR MORRIS HOTEL, MORRISTOWN, N.J.  
June 2, 1965

For almost six decades the American Jewish Committee has been in the vanguard of promoting and defending civil rights and civil liberties, combating bigotry and discrimination, and developing mutual understanding among Americans and peoples of diverse religious, racial and ethnic origins.

Formed in America as a result of persecution against Jews in Russia in the early 1900s, the Committee has blossomed to become, in a real sense, a major factor in America's human rights conscience to the world.

We have particularly watched the development of New Jersey's own AJC Chapter under the guidance of a very able human relations professional, Sidney Kellner. We have seen the New Jersey AJC march forward in concert with other human rights groups since the 1950s, always ready and willing to assist State agencies whenever called upon for advice and practical cooperation. We have watched with pride as AJC worked with business interests to stimulate job opportunities for minorities. We applaud your efforts to spread the word on open housing accommodations to members of the real estate industry; and your work in alerting the public to the more virulent forms of underground anti-Negro, anti-Catholic or anti-Semitic propaganda. And we all know of your special work in promoting a spirit of brotherhood and ecumenism in close collaboration with the clergy of all faiths.

We are all honored tonight to share the dais with a distinguished guest of yours, a fellow New Jerseyan, a great Attorney General of the United States, Nicholas DeB. Katzenbach. We need only look at the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the almost adopted Voting Rights Act of 1965 to gauge what history will say of him. For in these monuments to his commitment, he fulfilled the mandate of his Chief, <sup>President</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, who said just after assuming office: "As far as the writ of Federal law will run, we must abolish not some but all racial discrimination."

The writ of law has now run far and wide. But those in Congress or in the Executive Branch in Washington should not be expected to bear the full burden of civil rights. Does anyone seriously believe that generations of injustice followed by a century of neglect will be overcome in a few days or a few months by laws alone?

(more)

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Local communities and states cannot abdicate their responsibility. What is needed is a massive effort by public agencies and citizens' groups which will push forward the economic, political and social transformation through which this great liberal state is now moving. We must push open the closed door of American society and make sure that it stays open.

For three years, this Administration has sought legal, administrative and voluntary means to prevent and eliminate discrimination.

I say "prevent" as well as eliminate, because although we must deal with immediate pressing problems of job opportunity, open housing, education and training, we must absolutely build new structures, promulgate new administrative procedures and develop new legal approaches to prevent future discriminatory patterns from taking root.

Led by one of the most effective Attorneys General this State has ever had, Arthur J. Sills, we have tried to forge the instruments of a new civil rights era in New Jersey. We promised and effected the transfer of the Division on Civil Rights to the Department of Law and Public Safety to enhance its law enforcement capabilities, and we have established new judicial precedents in housing and public accommodations cases.

The series of far-reaching 1963 "de facto" school segregation decisions are being implemented, and continuous discussions are going forward between civil rights groups and the Commissioner of Education.

Important strides have also been made in opening up more skilled trades for minority group participation.

That we have not achieved perfection, I readily admit. But as John F. Kennedy said: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

We have taken those first steps and we shall take many more. But there are those who cannot wait on laws. And as our martyred President said just two years ago:

"The fires of frustration are burning in every city, North and South... Redress is sought in the streets, in demonstrations, in parades, and protests... We face a moral crisis as a country and as a people. It cannot be met by repressive police action. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations in the streets. It cannot be quieted by token moves or talk. It is a time to act...."

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