Council backs culinary unions on disputed rights agreement

The San Francisco Labor Council last month underscored its support of the culinary unions in the heated controversy over equal employment opportunities in the city’s hotels.

The Council’s December 9 session, after a rambling discussion, approved an Executive Committee recommendation approving and supporting the policy statement issued earlier by the Local Joint Executive Board of the Culinary Workers.

That policy statement grew from an arbitration award handed down by Arbitrator Robert E. Burns which found the 1966 civil rights agreements in the hotel industry unlawful, void and unenforceable.

IN NEWSPAPER ads and at a special press conference, representatives of the culinary unions and of the Labor Council offered a detailed explanation of the background to the arbitration award and a three-point proposal.

“We welcome the recognition that our collective bargaining contracts are vital, living documents, an important and necessary part of economic life,” the policy statement said.

“We pledge our continued efforts to administer our contracts without discrimination and to work toward expanded opportunity and higher living standards for San Franciscans of whatever racial, religious, or ethnic background.

“We stand ready to meet with the Human Rights Commission, with the responsible representatives of civil rights groups and minority communities, and with our employers, to discuss, to explore, to help where we can in resolving mutual problems.”

The Council’s executive committee expressed its conviction that the Joint Board is making “a maximum effort” to sustain the policy statement adopted last fall by the Labor Council, Building Trades, Teamsters and ILWU.

THAT POLICY, in brief, pledged labor support to affirmative action to broaden equal employment opportunity, insisting at the same time that its collective bargaining agreement be accorded “complete respect.”

Delegates were clearly in accord with the recommendation, though several expressed their feeling that unions were not doing enough.

A proposal to create an ad hoc committee to “do something positive about the employment of Negroes and other minority groups,” was referred to the executive committee for study.

Labor Council Sec. George W. Johns noted that the executive committee, as the Council’s most representative committee, has been working to do just that. And he added that these policies are no more than “a piece of paper unless they are implemented.”