

Commission on Rights Granted

ANCHORAGE---The Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has awarded a grant of \$22,576 to the Alaska Human Rights Commission to continue a program of investigating practices of discrimination by employers in the Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kenai areas.

Robert Willard, the agency's executive director, said he received notification of the grant on Monday, April 26, 1971, and that it would fund the salaries of a project director and secretarial support as well as travel and other administrative costs.

"The project is actually going into its third year," Willard said "and it is designed to investigate practice of recruitment and hire on the part of employers, as to why there is an under utilization of minority group workers".

Willard said that there are 28

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firms in the Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kenai areas that are currently under investigation having been charged with utilizing practice or practices of recruitment and hire that have the effect of excluding minority group persons, in addition to the 28 firms already charged with alleged discriminatory practices, 25 more firms in the Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kenai areas will also be charged.

This would bring to a total of 53 firms under investigation by the Human Rights Commission.

"This project is unlike individual complaints of discrimination," Willard said in making the announcement, "as the basic intent is to detect practices or policies that have the effect of excluding minority group persons."

Willard said his staff is now in the final process of designating which of the firms would be charged with alleged discriminatory practices.

He explained that primarily the charges were based upon and under utilization of minorities and the investigation of employer practices is conducted to determine how the commission can recommend charges in policy that will result in equal employment opportunity.

Willard would not disclose the names of the 25 firms that charges would be levied against "as Federal Law prohibits the disclosure of firm names to the

General Public".

"Hopefully, this action will not result in misunderstanding," Willard said, "the ultimate goal is to assist employers in revamping policies to effectuate equal opportunities.

State Law requires the commission to have a signed and notarized complaint on file before jurisdiction commences. This requirement to establish jurisdiction is the reason for filing formal charges.

After the investigation is made and discriminatory practices are detected, the commission then will negotiate with the respondent firm to make charges if the negotiation fails, the commission is empowered to hold public hearing, "which we will do if necessary", the Director said, "but, I would hope that this will not become necessary".

On the other hand, if no evidence is found to support the charge, then the case is dropped. Willard further said that with the contractual arrangement with EEOC, his agency can defer action to the EEOC, if the employers refuse to cooperate.

This has not occurred thus far, although in other states where similar projects are under way, deferments to the EEOC have been made, in which case the EEOC assumes jurisdiction and federal enforcement power are applied.