

The Philadelphia Inquirer

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THE INQUIRER'S PLATFORM

To print the news accurately and fearlessly but never to be content with merely printing the news; to strive always to uphold the principles of our American democracy, to war relentlessly against alien "isms," to fight intolerance, to be the friend and defender of those who are persecuted and oppressed; to demand equal justice for employer and employed; to work for the advancement of industry in Delaware Valley and Pennsylvania; to oppose political hypocrisy and corruption; to fight and never to cease fighting to maintain the sanctity of personal liberty and the inviolability of human rights.

Implementing the Philadelphia Plan

Adoption of the Philadelphia Plan for elimination of racial discrimination in training and hiring workers in the construction trades will be a significant step toward equality of job opportunity if contractors and unions will cooperate with the Federal Government in making the system work.

The plan derived its name from a pilot program that has been in operation in the Philadelphia area for the past year and now becomes official policy applying to federally-financed construction projects in this city and suburbs. The plan is to be put into effect elsewhere in the country as details are arranged.

Much criticism—a lot of it justified—was directed against the Philadelphia Plan when the pilot program began. This was to be expected. The purpose of the pilot operation was to eliminate inequities and make the plan workable.

A basic question from the outset has been whether the plan constitutes, in effect, a racial quota system for training and hiring construction workers. The Comptroller General of the United States, Elmer B. Staats, has pointed out, and correctly so, that a racial quota system would be illegal. Worse than that, it would be plainly discriminatory,

for there is nothing more clearly racist than to decide who gets a job solely on the basis of the color of the applicant's skin.

Attorney General John N. Mitchell and Secretary of Labor George P. Shultz both have emphasized that there will be no quota systems used in implementation of the Philadelphia Plan. The burden of responsibility will rest with contractors to demonstrate that they do not practice racial discrimination in hiring workers on federal projects. It should not be difficult to obtain evidence of discrimination, wherever it exists, if the work force does not come reasonably close to reflecting the racial makeup of job applicants who are qualified.

Whatever the complexities of implementation and enforcement, the substance of the Philadelphia Plan is simple enough: Every job applicant and every applicant for apprenticeship training should be treated equally, regardless of race, with no favoritism shown to persons of any race in administering qualifying examinations and establishing levels of competence in the skills to be performed. If the contractors and the unions will proceed on this basis, the Philadelphia Plan should be successfully implemented.