

Legalities Won't Halt Phila. Plan, U.S. Aide Says

Assistant U.S. Secretary of Labor Arthur Fletcher yesterday predicted the controversial Philadelphia Plan for hiring of minority group members will be adopted "despite any legal problems that could ultimately hang it up."

Fletcher made the statement at the conclusion of three days of hearings on the proposal at the Federal Building, 1421 Cherry st.

The hearings were being con-

ducted by a panel headed by Fletcher to fix the proportion of minority workers to be employed in seven building trades involved in federal projects.

"As far as I'm concerned," Fletcher said, "the Philadelphia Plan is only the beginning."

Wants No 'Games'

"If people play games with us, and frustrate the effort, black or white, we're in for very, very hard times indeed."

Fletcher said he wants concrete physical results on employment of minority group members in Philadelphia.

He said the Department of Labor numerical ranges for minority employment will be determined in the next several days.

The original Philadelphia Plan was suspended last November after a year's operation by U.S. Comptroller General Elmer B. Staats on the grounds that it violated federal bidding procedures. The new plan was rejected by Staats Aug. 5 on the grounds that it violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The Labor Department plans to revise and reinstate the plan, and hopes to extend its coverage to the rest of the nation.

For the long run, he stressed the importance of employers working with unions and community groups to establish area-wide training programs to pro-

duce a greater number of qualified minority group workers.

Specific Goals Set

The Labor Department, Fletcher said, is going to work to establish specific goals and timetables against which it can judge the community's compliance to the goals of the Philadelphia Plan.

If Congress is going to respond to the problem, he said, it has to receive concrete evidence of the Philadelphia Plan's achievement.

Of the testimony at the hearings, he said he was disappointed that he did not receive more specific information on the numbers of blacks available for hiring by contractors.

The Labor Department's central effort, he said, will be to establish a "performance environment" in Philadelphia, after which it will be up to the community, contractors, union members and minority groups alike, to develop their own plan for the area.

Before the hearing ended, a witness urged joint ventures between black and white contractors as a move toward solving the problem.

The proposal was made in testimony by Emerson Ray Allen, business manager for the General and Specialty Contractors Association of Philadelphia, an association of 110 minority

group contractors.

Allen, who said he has been an electrical contractor for 25 years, offered the proposal as a short-term solution.

He said black contractors would gain much knowledge in a cooperative effort with more knowledgeable white contractors.

"Joint ventures," he said, are the best way to implement the Philadelphia Plan with the greatest benefit to the black community."

As a long term solution, he said, "the Philadelphia black community has a right to expect 33 percent participation in all phases of construction" within four years.

Allen said one third of the population of Philadelphia was composed of minority group members and that, therefore, one third of all the building trades workers should also be minority group members.