

Agency Challenges Report On Minority Job Gains Here

The Council for Equal Job Opportunity, an agency of the Fellowship Commission, today challenged a recent U.S. Labor Department announcement citing gains in minority employment on federal construction projects here.

Thomas Rowe, CEJO president, said in a letter to U.S. Labor Secretary James D. Hodgson that "since the Philadelphia Plan was put into effect a year ago, the overall percentage of skilled minority craftsmen in the community remains virtually unchanged from last year — about 2 percent."

Says Public Is Deceived

He said that such reports "unwittingly deceive the public into believing that the percentage of skilled minority workers is up substantially.

The Philadelphia Plan requires contractors on federally financed construction projects to hire a representative number of minority workers.

Rowe said the department's announcement said that a study of 25 current area projects showed that the number of minority iron workers was up from 1.4 percent last year to 30 percent this year; steamfitters up from .65 percent to 25 percent, with other crafts experiencing similar increases.

180 Jobs Studied

Rowe said the announcement represented a "study of only 180 jobs, 41 of which are held by minority workers."

Rowe also said the survey was "hastily arranged and carried out by the department's Washington office, rather than by a local government compliance agency. He suggested that the office be improved "to avoid any possibility of collusion, whereby contractors could bring minority people from other jobs to federal jobs for the purpose of simply passing the inspection."

Rowe said future construction manpower needs — the Bicentennial, Market Street West, Northeast subway extension — call for massive

journeyman programs, aimed at increasing the total number of skilled craftsmen available for the entire metropolitan area.

He urged Hodgson to encourage contractors and unions to start such programs.