

VOICE
exclusive **Negroes Miss Out on Apprentice Programs**

Subject: APPRENTICESHIP and TRAINING (including Upgrading of Skills)

WORKSHOPS ON APPRENTICESHIP and training, including upgrading of skills, generally agreed on the following points:

1. Equal opportunity on apprenticeship and training has a significance beyond the number of jobs represented. Such opportunities symbolize minority group interest and need to find new and broader gateways to skilled employment in this period of increasing technological change.

2. It is a fact that the number and percentage of Negroes and certain other minority groups in apprenticeship programs is small in manufacturing and other sectors of the economy as well as in the construction industry.

3. In recent years some progress toward greater equality of opportunity has been made in reducing the preferences for relatives of members, in securing adoption of objective standards for selection on the basis of qualifications and in establishing centers for disseminating information about apprenticeship openings. But to date, the number of minority group apprentices has not increased significantly.

4. A substantial increase in minority group participation in apprenticeship programs is needed and should be stimulated (a) by apprenticeship program sponsors engaging in positive recruitment of potential minority group applicants in schools, neighborhoods and organizations where such applicants could be expected to be found, (b) by government sponsored supplementary training and remedial education opportunities for potentially qualified applicants and (c) by substantial improvement of secondary school curricula and counselling for those interested in apprenticeship to provide them with the education they need to meet the standards of the skilled trades.

WHILE THERE WAS AGREEMENT on the need for affirmative action and on the Commission's role in stimulating such action by private

parties and government agencies, there was disagreement as to whether the Commission could or should insist on more than fair and non-discriminatory selection procedures in enforcing Title VII.

Some urged the Commission to consider that Title VII is violated unless minority group apprentices are actually selected in apprentice programs in question. Others declared that the Commission should agree with other Federal agencies that selection of apprentices on the basis of objective standards for determining qualifications is not discriminatory even if no minority group apprentices are selected.

There was also disagreement on the appropriateness of a massive and accelerated program of apprentice training--primarily for minority groups. Those opposing this suggestion pointed to the high unemployment that continues to characterize many apprenticeable trades. There did seem to be general recognition, however, of the importance of better information concerning the manpower needs of the future, in order to permit more accurate and possibly less conservative scheduling of apprentice classes.

Recurrent themes in these workshops were concern for the current curriculum in vocational education schools and effective methods of recruiting minority group candidates for apprenticeship and training programs.

THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE FEELING that the vocational education system is outmoded and inadequate to qualify graduates for apprenticeship and training programs. Moreover, there was strong criticism of the lack of awareness on the part of vocational counsellors in these schools--as well as in all public schools--of the qualifications required in the skilled trades and the opportunities for minority group members in such trades.

There were numerous suggestions for Commission efforts to encourage improved recruitment of prospective applicants for apprenticeship and training programs, such as strengthening the services of Apprenticeship Informa-

tion Centers, seeking to recruit apprentices for the skilled building trades from the Laborers Union, and methods for broader dissemination to recruiting agencies of information about apprentice and training openings. In addition, the Commission was asked to give encouragement to remedial programs for minority groups which are victims of inferior educational systems.

Emphasis was also placed on the special responsibility of various agencies of the Federal Government to end discrimination or segregation in vocational education, apprenticeship programs, and public employment services supported by Federal funds.

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