

New Ruling On Jews

The Jews are now included in the government's program for affirmative action in employment.

The Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCC) has just issued affirmative action guidelines specifically covering "members of various religious and ethnic groups . . . such as Jews, Catholics, Italians, Greeks and Slavic groups (who) continue to be excluded from executive, middle-management and other job levels because of discrimination based upon their religion and/or national origin."



Raab

The OFCC, part of the Department of Labor, is the basic agency which establishes such guidelines, for all private enterprise doing business with the government. That covers just about every business of any size these days, from the oil companies and the banks to the manufacturing establishments.

Business is told by the OFCC that they "must take affirmative action to insure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment without regard to their religion or national origin." To begin with, this affirmative action calls for each business to make "a review . . . to determine whether members of the various religious and or ethnic groups are receiving fair consideration for job opportunities."

If there are discovered "existing deficiencies" with respect, say, to the number of Jews in executive or middle management positions in a given firm, then certain affirmative action steps must be taken, such as: 1) telling the firm's recruitment sources, including college placement and employment agency officials, that the firm is specifically looking for qualified or qualifiable Jews; 2) "establishing meaningful contacts with religious and ethnic organizations and leaders" for advice and for specific referral of potential employees. Apparently the new San Francisco Jewish Vocational Service is being set up by our Jewish Welfare Federation in the nick of time; 3) use of the religious and ethnic media for advertising job openings.

These particular affirmative action guidelines (Section 60-50 of Title 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations) were instituted largely in response to the organized Jewish community. There has, of course, been the general complaint that the employment needs of the Jews have been overlooked. And national agencies such as the AJ Committee and the A.D.L. have long been concerned about the low proportion of Jews in executive positions in corporate life. The AJ Committee did a survey in San Francisco not long ago and found that only about one per cent of corporate executives in this area are Jewish, although about six per cent of the population are Jewish.

This disproportion becomes increasingly important since the occupational pattern of Jews is destined to change, as noted here recently. For one thing, family-owned businesses are all turning into public corporations. The various concerned agencies in the San Francisco JCRC, such as the AJ Committee, the A.D.L. and the A.J. Congress will undoubtedly be meeting with each other—and jointly with the Jewish Vocational Service, and with the Human Rights Commission—on the local implementation of Section 60-50.

Along with the opportunities, there will be some problems to work out. For example, in order to assess "existing deficiencies," it will be necessary for the employers to make a head count of, say the number of Jews working in the firm. The regulations do not yet specify how that will be done. At best, it will be some version of the visual count used for racial minorities. That is, there will be no direct inquiry to employees. Perhaps department heads will be asked to estimate the number of Jews under their supervision by name identification, by holiday observance, or by "general knowledge," which is usually accurate enough for these purposes. If supervisors start saying: "Okay, all Jews, raise your hands—" or if employees are asked to record their religions in any way, then we will have a problem.

Then, there is the matter of helping the firm set a "goal" figure, without which there will be no way of measuring "existing deficiencies." Perhaps we can help them establish a goal based on a sensible "manpower availability" figure, rather than on raw population percentage. And, if tired corporate bureaucrats begin to use that figure as an automatic quota rather than as a goal, then we will be in a position to object on most principled grounds.

In short, among the opportunities offered by this new situation is a chance for the Jewish community to make clear what it has meant all along by a sound affirmative action program.

