

Puerto Rican Action on Equal Rights

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SAN JUAN, P.R., Aug. 21—A panel of mainland specialists in civil rights said today that the Puerto Rican government "can and should do more to insure the equal and fair application of the law to all Puerto Ricans."

"There is a crying need for government to respond to the alarming charges of political repression" on the island, said Ann Fagan Ginger, president

of the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Library in Berkeley, Calif. Mrs. Ginger is one of five members of what is called a special commission of inquiry from New York's Center for Constitutional Rights, which has been conducting hearings this week into the growing list of complaints that basic rights guaranteed Puerto Ricans by the constitution of the commonwealth and of the

United States, are being violated. The other members are four law professors: Herbert O. Reid of Howard University, Daniel Collins of New York University, Thomas Farer of Rutgers and Jon Van Dyke of the University of California's Hastings College of Law. The Center for Constitutional Rights is a group of liberal lawyers who mainly assist

in cases dealing with civil rights, most recently involving Black Panthers. In a six-page preliminary report issued to the press today, the commission concluded that it felt "strongly at the present time that the government of Puerto Rico, and particularly those officials responsible for the conduct of the police, can and should do more to ensure the equal and fair application of the law to all Puerto Ri-

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cans, regardless of political beliefs."

Nearly all of the more than 50 witnesses who testified identified themselves as independentists advocating separation from the United States.

Allegations ranged from the subtle to the brutal, including the use of wiretaps, political criteria in hiring and firing public and private workers, discriminatory law enforcement and arrests and beatings without probable cause.

Of the dozens of government officials invited to testify, only the head of the Commonwealth Civil Rights Commission, Baltasar Corrada del Rio, turned up. He challenged the moral and legal right of the inquiry, and called on the commission to "investigate your own houses on the mainland" and to "look instead into the problems of human liberty in Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic."