

Daley Unit Probed For Hatch Offense

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CHICAGO, Aug. 22—The U.S. Civil Service Commission has begun a major investigation into charges of widespread violations of the federal Hatch Act by patronage workers of Mayor Richard J. Daley's Cook County Democratic machine who are employed in projects supported by government funds.

The commission moved into the city Aug. 14 with a force of 15 investigators. It has reported uncovering more than 60 violations of the act, which prohibits partisan political activity by federal employees and state and local employees of programs funded through federal grants.

Benjamin Joseph, assistant general counsel for the commission, who is conducting the Chicago investigation, said the probe here has been the most successful of its kind ever conducted by his agency.

Most of the Hatch Act violations were found among employees of Chicago's Model Cities and local Office of Economic Opportunity programs, which last year received \$97 million in federal funds. Joseph said his findings thus far may be only the "tip of an iceberg."

The commission acted after receiving evidence of Hatch Act violations from the Lerner newspapers, a chain of community newspapers here, and the Better Government Asso-

ciation, a local civic watchdog group.

Joseph said most of the violations occurred among patronage employees who circulated nominating petitions for Democratic candidates in the Illinois March primary.

He said formal charges will be brought by the commission against the initial group of violators within the next two weeks. Persons found guilty of violating the Hatch Act are subject to dismissal from their jobs.

Earlier this month a three-judge federal district court in Washington ruled that the act was unconstitutionally vague, but immediately stayed its ruling to give the Supreme court an opportunity to hear the case.

The Justice Department has not yet decided whether to appeal the ruling to the high court.