

Justice Dept.

Hit on Rights

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — The nation's largest civil rights coalition accused the government today of subsidizing racial discrimination by handing millions of dollars in crime-fighting money to state and local law enforcement agencies without assurance of equal hiring and promotion practices.

But in what a spokesman said was "sheer coincidence," Attorney General John Mitchell almost simultaneously announced that 21 federal agencies had proposed regulations to strengthen federal prohibitions against racial discrimination in federally assisted programs.

'Glaring, Blatant'

Shortly before Mitchell's announcement, chairman Roy Wilkins of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights said, "what this amounts to is a glaring and blatant disregard for the laws of this land."

He said the Justice Department's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration was spending more than \$250,000 in grants to the Mississippi Highway Patrol "when its first black patrolman has yet to be hired."

Timing Coincidence

The Department, meanwhile, said the list of more

than 100 proposals made public today was not the result of the coalition's criticism but had been under consideration for some time. The timing of the release, said a spokesman, was "sheer coincidence."

They were published in the Federal Register and interested persons have 30 days to comment before they become effective.

Included is a regulation that requires any recipient of federal funds who has discriminated on the basis of race, color or national origin to take affirmative action to correct the effects of such discrimination.

Site Choice

Another provides that no recipient of federal funds may select a site for a new facility with the purpose or effect of excluding anyone on the grounds of race, color or national origin.

Wilkins said there could be no hope of fair treatment of blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and Indians "at the hands of the law" unless they are employed in law enforcement agencies.

"There can be no hope of establishing equality before the law when the people who run the system and make the critical decisions are almost exclusively white," he said.