

Nixon Target Of Report on Civil Rights

N.Y. Times Service

Washington

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission, for the fourth time in three years, has painted a bleak picture of the Nixon administration's enforcement of laws and regulations affecting the nation's minority groups.

Once again, the commission placed on the President the ultimate blame for the lack of adequate enforcement of civil rights laws, which the agency said it found.

In a 429-page report released yesterday, the commission used the same blunt language as in its three previous assessments. But the tone was noticeably more pessimistic, despite a few encouraging signs the commission said it had observed.

"This latest commission study has reinforced the

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findings of the three preceding reports that the Government's civil rights program is not adequate or even close to it," the commission reported.

The report by the commission found that "the inertia of agencies in the area of civil rights persisted," and that no agency investigated by the body accorded high-level priority and commitment to civil rights enforcement.

The commission has authority to investigate complaints of civil rights violations, to collect information and appraise Federal laws and policies on the subject, and to submit reports and recommendations to the President and Congress. For its report, it investigated all Federal agencies dealing with domestic affairs, including departments and regulatory bodies.

The study was the last under the leadership of the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, whom the White House forced to resign as chairman in November.

Father Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, had been sharply critical of the Administration on civil rights. He has not been replaced as commission chairman.

REPORT

The report, noting that historically the presidency had been the source of power and conscience in the Nation, said:

"Presidential leadership has brought us far along the road toward the accomplishment of international understanding, cooperation and friendship with many of our hitherto implacable enemies. For this the Nation should be grateful.

"Presidential leadership has not yet been brought equally to bear on the creation of a similar situation within the nation. Without the leadership of the President, this job not only becomes infinitely more difficult, but a steady erosion of the progress toward equal rights, equal justice and equal pro-

tection under the Constitution will occur."

STUDY

The study was completed last September, and Administration sources reported that it was withheld because of the November elections. The commission said it plans to complete another study next summer.

"While we do not feel that our efforts have thus far produced significant results, this commission remains committed to reviewing periodically the civil rights enforcement activities of the Federal agencies," the report said.

The commission said that

significant enforcement actions were frequently accompanied by extensive delays, such as in the issuance of regulations and their implementation. But worst of all, the commission said, was the delay in imposing sanctions when discrimination was found.

No government-wide plan for civil rights enforcement existed, the report said. Further, there was no effective coordination among agencies with similar responsibilities, for example, in the jobs field, where the Civil Service Commission, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission share responsibilities.

COUNCIL

The report criticized the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinating Council, created by Congress last year to effect such coordination, for not having "addressed any substantive issues in the first six months of its existence."

On the other hand, the report noted some improvements: the Equal Opportunity Office has upgraded extensively its enforcement mechanism; the Department of Health, Education and Welfare performs special studies in the area of health and social services apart from its regular rights reviews, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development has issued regulations requiring builders and developers, prior to approval of assistance, to demonstrate that they have taken positive steps to rent or sell to minorities.

Also, the Environmental Protection Agency, although a relatively new agency, "has demonstrated energy and creativity in its efforts," the commission said.

Nevertheless, "for every step forward, numerous cases of inaction can be cited," the report added.