

fair questions in this state. Only questions pertaining to qualifications for the job, the skills and abilities and education of applicants are legal. On this score the employer has all the freedom in the world in his search and selection of a capable employe.

Oregon's FEP act is not recognized as an overnight solution to all racial and religious discrimination but as a first step toward a situation in which all citizens will have an equal opportunity in a free democracy.

Education has been the keystone of the Oregon law both in the overall program and in the handling of complaints filed. After 16 months of operation the labor department under Commissioner W. E. Kimsey, who is responsible for administration of the act, has investigated 24 formal complaints. Twenty-two of these involved job discrimination on the basis of racial prejudice, two involved religious grounds and national origin. Five involved discrimination by labor unions; two by the civil service and the remainder by private employers. Sixteen cases have been closed. Three of the were settled when no discrimination was found; two for lack of jurisdiction under the law; two when discriminatory practices were corrected and nine by conciliation and persuasion. Eight cases are pending. It is the hope of commissioner Kimsey that Oregon will never have to invoke the penalties provided for infractions of the law.

Presently one labor union which is hostilely prejudicial on the matter of admitting Negroes to membership is bucking the FEP act. A series of conciliatory meetings over months seem to have born little fruit. The possibility of a public hearing looms. This one union case involving truculent attitudes of union officials is in direct contrast to actions of other union "bosses" who with the help of the bureau of labor have been successful in changing the prejudicial attitudes of their union members toward minority groups.

Mr. Kimsey is assisted in his administration by two professional staff workers. William S. Van Meter, who has done graduate work in group prejudice at Harvard university investigates complaints filed under the act.

Kathrine S. French, Columbia university-educated anthropologist is responsible for the formal education program throughout the state. An advisory committee representing the public, management and labor, appointed by the governor, assists Mr. Kimsey's department on a voluntary basis.

Predictions that the bureau of labor would be swamped with complaints by disgruntled and unreasonable job hunters and employes have not materialized.

"Most members of minority groups are reluctant to file complaints," says Mr. Kimsey. He points out that members of such groups as a rule are fair in airing their grievances and in accepting decisions of his department.

Such fairness in the midst of bitterness is evidenced in one of the complaints on file. A Negro handyman at an Oregon clubhouse whose job among other things was to collect empty cocktail glasses and return them to the bar, one night got into a heated argument with his white boss. The latter accused him of not "chasing empty whiskey glasses" as he should have been doing. Hot words passed between the two. During the argument the boss roared. "When you speak to me call me Mister!" After the night's work the Negro employe was told to pick up his check at the cashier's window. He later filed a complaint asserting he was fired because of race. After an investigation of the circumstances and conferences with both employer and employee, the fired employee agreed with the bureau of labor deputy that his race probably had nothing to do with it and that the whole situation grew out of a "normal" argument between him and the boss.

After a series of conciliatory talks most of the employers complained against have swung around to more tolerant attitudes, shedding part if not all of their former prejudices. One such employer said flatly "Discrimination is just ammunition for Joe Stalin." He finally agreed the FEP act was a good thing if Americans really meant what they said about democracy. This man opened his plant to the hiring of Negroes on an equal basis with other Americans.

Commissioner Kimsey stresses: "It is