

unwarranted economic or other pressures are being applied to deny fundamental rights safeguarded by the Constitution and laws of the United States.

The need for a full scale public study as requested by the President is manifest. The executive branch of the federal government has no general investigative power of the scope required to undertake such a study. The study should be objective and free from partisanship. It should be broad and at the same time thorough.

Civil rights are of primary concern to all our people. To this end the Commission's membership must be truly bipartisan and geographically representative.

A bill detailing the Commission proposal is submitted with this statement.

The proposed legislation provides that the Commission shall have six members, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. No more than three may be of the same political party. The Commission will be temporary, expiring two years from the effective date of the statute, unless extended by Congress. It will have authority to subpoena witnesses, take testimony under oath, and request necessary data from any executive department or agency. It may be required to make interim reports pending completion of a comprehensive final report containing findings and recommendations.

The Commission will have authority to hold public hearings. Knowledge and understanding of every element of the problem will give greater clarity and perspective to one of the most difficult problems facing our country. Such a study, fairly conducted, will tend to unite responsible people in common effort to solve these problems. Investigation and hearings will bring into sharper focus the areas of responsibility of the federal government and of the states under our constitutional system. Through greater public understanding, therefore, the Commission may chart a course of progress to guide us in the years ahead.

## II

At present the Civil Rights Section of the Department of Justice is one of a number of sections located within the Criminal Division. The protection of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution is a governmental function and responsibility of first importance. It merits the full direction of a highly qualified lawyer, with the status of Assistant Attorney General, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

