

Prisons Integrated, State Says

By BEAU CUTTS

Georgia's prison system is thoroughly integrated by race, according to figures released Wednesday by the state Department of Corrections.

Black and white prisoners are assigned to each of the 16 state-owned institutions and to the 40 county-owned facilities which use the manpower of state inmates, said Al Dutton, deputy commissioner for institutional operations.

In a lawsuit in Houston, the U. S. Justice department recently charged the Texas Department of Corrections with systematically discriminating against black inmates by operating racially segregated cells, cell blocks and dormitories. About 44 per cent of the prison population in Texas is black.

But in Georgia, following court orders of several years ago and now a department policy, state prison food service, housing and work quarters are desegregated, Dutton said.

"We were required to integrate," he said. Inmate assignments to institutions or cells are made on the basis of prisoner age, number of prior convictions and length of sentence, Dutton said, adding: "We don't practice racial discrimination."

As of late May, there were 8,601 prisoners in the state and county facilities, he said. Blacks accounted for about 60 per cent of the total. By the 1970 census of Georgia, blacks were 26 per cent of the state's total population.

Included in the tabulation of racial compositions in the state prison system listed by Dutton were the Georgia State Prison, Reidsville, 938 whites and 1,371 blacks; Georgia Industrial Institute, Alto, 334 whites and 593 blacks; Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Center, Jackson, 315 whites and 308 blacks; and the Georgia Training and Development Center, Buford, 90 whites and 99 blacks.

Among the county-owned facilities which maintain state prisoners in return for work on county roads and other services were Fulton County, 87 whites and 212 blacks; Gwinnett County, 45 whites and 60 blacks; Hall County, 77 whites and 30 blacks; and Richmond County, 52 whites and 127 blacks, according to Dutton.