

## U. S. Accuses 11 in Louisiana Of Coercing a Negro Witness

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 (UPI) —The Federal Government filed suit today charging eleven business men in Louisiana with using "serious economic coercion" against a Negro cotton farmer who testified at a Civil Rights Commission hearing last September.

Attorney General William P. Rogers said the suit had been filed in United States District Court at Shreveport, La.

The complaint accused the defendants of refusing to gin cotton for the farmer, Francis Joseph Atlas, 56 years old, of Lake Providence, La., and of using other forms of economic coercion against him after he testified at a New Orleans hearing Sept. 27-28 on what he described as his unsuccessful efforts to become a registered voter.

The complaint alleged that John Gilbert, sheriff of East Carroll Parish, had told Mr. Atlas that the cotton ginners of the area would not process cotton for him after his testimony. The coercion was applied, according to the Government, to discourage Mr. Atlas and other Negroes in the area from trying to become registered voters or give information to the Civil Rights Commission.

The eleven individuals, and a like number of corporations in Carroll County, were charged with violating the 1957 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits economic pressure against a citizen attempting to exercise his voting rights.

Assistant Attorney General Harold R. Tyler Jr. said: "in this case, the defendants who control the means of processing cotton and soybeans have shut off a citizen's opportunity to market his crops."

"Since this action was taken for the purpose of penalizing Mr. Atlas for his efforts to become registered to vote," Mr.

Tyler said, "it is a violation of the Civil Rights Act to 1957.

The individual defendants listed in the complaint are Baxter Deal, operator of Planters Butane Heat and Power, Inc.; J. P. Brown, Gailliard Plantation Gin operator; Howard Gittinger and William T. Mitchiner, operators of Olivedell Planting Company and Olive-dell Gin; John Gilbert, sheriff of East Carroll Parish; George T. Hider, part owner of Hider Brothers, Inc.; Kenner Howard, manager of Howard Gin Company; Ebert M. Norris and John Terral, Farmer's Feed and Seed Company; Luke Warren, Warren & Coody Grain Company; and Andrew L. Yerger, Outpost Gin Company.