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McKeithen Vows to Battle Ruling on Rackets Panel

By BILL NEIKIRK

BATON ROUGE (AP)—Gov. John J. McKeithen says he will "carry to the finish" a court fight to overturn a district judge's ruling that voided a state law establishing the state's labor-management rackets commission.

Meantime, the governor said, a public hearing by the commission into labor troubles that halted a pipeline construction in Iberville Parish will proceed as scheduled on Monday.

M'KEITHEN ALSO said a Teamsters Union in Baton Rouge attempted to coerce and intimidate him, the commission and the courts in connection with the court suit attacking the law.

Dist. Judge Fred A. Blanche Jr. yesterday declared the Labor-Management Commission of Inquiry unconstitutional, saying in a nine-page decision that it fails to guarantee an accused person constitutional safeguards.

BLANCHE SAID he would allow the commission to function while his decision is being appealed to a higher court. Legal sources in the

capitol said the state was entitled to a suspension of the ruling, anyway, pending the appeal.

"We will proceed right on Monday as we attempt to expose bombers, shooters and racketeers," McKeithen said.

Blanche said the commission is more a fact-finding body in that its function is to determine in an open hearing whether a person has violated a law.

WITHOUT SAFEGUARDS of proper cross-examination, subpoenaing witnesses, and confronting accusers, an accused person "has no real opportunity to explain away the charges made against him," the judge said.

The purposes of the law can be accomplished through

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judges, grand juries and district attorneys, he said.

"We are very disappointed that Judge Blanche has declared unconstitutional the unanimous work of the state Legislature—and the best lawyers in the state we could find from labor and management and from our law schools, including the deans from LSU and Tulane," McKeithen said.

"ALL OF THEM and all of us use feel he is wrong. We have a right by law to a suspensive appeal. We shall exercise it immediately. He is giving us that right, of which we are appreciative," the governor added.

"The decision is a considerable surprise to me," said Dean Paul M. Hebert of the LSU Law School. "It will, of course, be fought strenuously in the appellate courts." Hebert helped draft the legislation approved in a special session last summer.

McKeithen said a "small group in the labor movement, in this state, specifically a Teamster local of Baton Rouge," tried to intimidate and coerce the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

BUT, THE governor added, their efforts to keep the panel from determining "who has been bombing homes in this state, who has been bombing places of business, who has been bombing oil and gas wells, and who has engaged in other illegal practices, will bring them naught."

McKeithen referred to Teamster pickets who showed up for the first commission hearing last month. The governor said Teamsters also crowded into the courtroom and hallway yesterday and after that, picketed in front of the governor's mansion in an effort to intimidate him.

"We are determined to carry this thing through to the finish and we shall not be coerced or intimidated and state government will not be coerced or intimidated by anyone," the governor said.