

M'KEITHEN VOWS TO JAIL LABOR STRIFE HOODLUMS

By BILL LYNCH
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—Gov. John J. McKeithen today called for the successful prosecution of "hoodlums" who attacked and shot non-union construction workers on a job site in the town of Plaquemine, and warned he is ready to have the state attorney general supersede local officials.

McKeithen declared that the violence that erupted on a drainage project was carried out by members of Teamsters Local No. 5 in Baton Rouge.

THE TEAMSTERS LOCAL, headed by Edward Grady Partin, has become deeply enmeshed in the Baton Rouge industrial area's labor problems and is a target of the state labor-government investigation commission's probe.

"Our investigation to date indicates that this hoodlumistic, cowardly attack was made by the Teamsters local in Baton Rouge," the governor said, "and those who made the attack are going to be prosecuted."

HE SAID THERE WAS NO INDICATION that local authorities, namely the district attorney, was not going to follow through but declared he was ready to ask Atty. Gen. Jack P. F. Gremillion to step in and take over.

"So there will be no misunderstanding on anyone's part about our determination to punish those guilty parties," McKeithen said, "if at the first indication of a lack of sincere determination or zeal on the part of the authorities in the district affected, I shall immediately request the

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attorney general to exercise full and complete supervision of all phases of this prosecution and the preliminary work leading to it."

FIVE PERSONS WORKING FOR THE W. O. Bergeron Contracting Co., which was laying a sewer line on a \$1.5 million drainage project, were wounded Wednesday when about 50 persons drove up to the site and a melee began.

The governor ordered the state police into the investigation and said they were carrying on a probe on their own, without necessarily cooperating with local officials.

One person has been charged with disturbing the peace in connection with the incident. He was arrested by a state police trooper on the highway.

PLAQUEMINE IS IN Iberville Parish, which has been the first area of exploration in the labor-management commission's investigation of racketeering, shakedowns and gangsterism.

McKeithen, obviously upset by the sudden surge of bad publicity for the state, said that Louisiana is on trial again.

"News of this attack on Louisiana men legally and lawfully at work on a project within our state has, of course, made the headlines of the nation," he said.

"IT CANNOT be allowed to reoccur, and those who were guilty of this attack must be punished—and they shall be."

He said the state investigation shows the attack was directed "from a distance."

"We are going to see particularly that those behind the attack and those who directed it from a distance are going to be prosecuted," McKeithen said.

HE SAID THE state police and labor-management investigators are being instructed to spend full time on the investigation until it is com-

pleted.

"We are not going to be intimidated," he said. "We are not going to be coerced."

He said the investigation thus far reveals indications that there was more behind the attack than just a dispute between construction workers.

"The attack may have taken place at least partially because of certain equipment on the job and the type of materials and who is furnishing the materials," the governor said.

ONE ASPECT of the labor-management board's public hearings has been on the rental of equipment, some of it unneeded, by certain firms and individuals to contractors and companies.

"The entire state has been challenged by a small group of hoodlums and the challenge is accepted," McKeithen said. "If we cannot place behind bars the hoodlums who attacked the men in Plaquemine, then Louisiana doesn't deserve any place of leadership and doesn't deserve the respect of the rest of this nation."

"We cannot, of course, expect the confidence of those whom we are trying to bring here and keep here to provide jobs for the people of this state," he said.

"IN OTHER WORDS," the governor asserted, "we are going to put some people in the state penitentiary for aggravated battery. That's what we are going to do."

McKeithen said full-time protection has been assigned the Bergeron firm to complete the project in Iberville Parish. The Plaquemine police chief had at first ordered Bergeron to shut down the job until he got his business straight.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has offered its complete cooperation, McKeithen said.

HE CALLED THE violence a disgrace to every union man in the state and said there is no question it has hurt the labor movement in the state. However, he said he did not think it would lead to right-to-work legislation.

McKeithen said that Teamster officials have denied participating in the attack.

"Of course," he quipped, "they were somewhere teaching Sunday school."

He said, "There's no question but what the gauntlet was thrown down for me and I immediately picked it up."