

Louisiana Politics

B.R. Rackets Article on Target



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By **BILL LYNCH**
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — An article in the August issue of Fortune Magazine probably presents the most accurate round-up of the labor racketeering in Baton Rouge that has been published by a national publication.



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From time to time there have been a variety of stories on the national level presenting in one degree or another an aspect of the mess that

has been Baton Rouge's albatross for the past two years.

Most have skimmed the surface or have concentrated on a single theme, such as the recent Wall Street Journal article which stressed the role of the U.S. Justice Department in its protection of Baton Rouge Teamster boss Edward G. Partin.

The Fortune article takes to task — sometimes in pretty strong language — nearly everyone connected with what it calls "the big shakedown in Baton Rouge." It tells of extortion, bribery, featherbedding and low political and public ethics existing in the area.

Management is hit just as hard as labor, public apathy

as well as official corruption. The vagaries of government involvement on the state, local and national levels is brought into sharp focus.

NATURALLY enough, reaction by Gov. McKeithen's administration has been somewhat silent. The governor comes in for a scolding, too.

One administration leader, after reading the article, shrugged his shoulders in dis-

missal of what impact it might have:

"No one reads Fortune, anyway," he said.

William T. Hackett Jr, director of the Department of Commerce and Industry, reacted with a predictable response to something that makes his job even more difficult than it was.

"His conclusions," Hackett said of the author, "are

not accurate."

Ironically it was Hackett, who first got Fortune interested in sending a team of reporters and a photographer to Louisiana to do the story. What he hoped for, however, was more favorable than what he received.

Defending the governor's part in the ups and downs of the Labor-Management Commission, Hackett said, "No other state except Louisiana has ever attempted to clean up labor-management abuses through concerted action on the state level."

Another member of the governor's inner circle suggested that the state really did not belong in the business of solving labor-management problems and that it was performing a favor by doing so.

THE LABOR management situation in this area has been detailed in copious quantity and with considerable accuracy in the state press. Much of what Fortune recounts already is a matter of record.

The Fortune article now brings the situation to the attention of an important segment of the American economy — people with a say-so where investments in new plants will go.

Hackett may publicly defend the work of the Labor-Management Commission in his efforts to renew management confidence in Louisiana, but the failure of the commission to clean up the mess remains an established fact.

Construction is off in the Baton Rouge area. The 1965 boom that treated the labor shortage has ended. Where 13,000 were at work in industrial construction two years ago, the Louisiana Manufacturers Association reports that there are less than 4,000 today.

ONE MAJOR plant already has changed locations and others which still are looking for river sites — including some major international industries — are taking second looks at the labor situation. The Fortune article won't help the state much.

The state gets hit pretty hard when the article said:

"The basic cause of corruption and labor trouble in Baton Rouge is the incredibly low level of public ethics in Louisiana."

It quotes an unnamed Baton Rouge attorney summarizing the situation thus:

"Reform in Louisiana consists of turning the fat hogs out and letting the lean hogs in."

Unions Rapped For Hike in Work Delays

By **BILL LYNCH**
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — Spokesmen for the Louisiana Manufacturers Association charged today that the ratio of work stoppages in the trouble-plagued Baton Rouge industrial construction field has increased over the last 10 months.

Ford S. Lacey, executive vice president of the LMA, and Thomas McFerrin, special counsel for the LMA and an assistant attorney general, both criticized the labor situation in the area.

Lacey complained that the primary problem centers around unions failing to provide enough men to fill job requirements.

HE SAID there have been more than 25 work stoppages in the past 10 months, half of which were of a jurisdictional nature, expressly prohibited by a memorandum of under-

standing reached two years ago between international unions and contractors.

Lacey recently leveled strong criticism at the lack of prosecution of labor-management cases involving labor racketeering in the area.

McFerrin, former chief counsel of the Labor-Management Commission, said that construction labor problems involving work stoppages have reached the highest incident rate when the decreased level of employment is taken into account.

The jurisdictional disputes and repeated work stoppages led to a shutdown of industrial construction in 1967.

FOR AN 11 MONTH period following Oct. 17, 1967, there were 50 reported work stoppages, 36 of which were jurisdictional. At that time the work force totaled about 13,000 men.