More than 5,000 await word on 1,200 Port of Iberia jobs

NEW IBERIA — The rush is over, with months of anxious waiting ahead for more than 5,000 applicants for the jobs at Brown and Root's new Port of Iberia job site.

Friday was the final day company and Job Service officials were taking applications at the Catholic High gym. At close of business Friday, 5,618 people had applied.

The week began with a flood tide that steadily declined with each passing day, local Job Service director Paul Melancon said. Monday came 2,783. Tuesday's headcount dropped to 944. Wednesday it was 715. Thursday 650 came in to apply. Friday saw the smallest crowd, a mere 527, Melancon said.

The company will continue to take applications at its newly established office on Lewis Street at the Port, according to personnel director Rick Hopper. Business hours will be 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The phone number is 367-1777.

Company personnel manager Rick Hopper said screening all those applications will take some time. Hiring should begin in about a month, he said. About 300 people should be employed by the end of the year, with the project up to full steam by mid-1986. By that time about 1,200 people should be working, he said.

The vast majority of the applications came from a 100-mile radius of New Iberia, he said. That, plus the enterprise zone requirement that a company take local folks off the jobless rolls, means most of the jobs at the site should go to local people, he said.

"I'm real impressed with the quality of a lot of these applicants," he said. "There's absolutely no reason to have to go outside Louisiana to fill these jobs."