BANKERS' POWER CALLED GREAT

Guthrie Urges Group to Accept Challenge

Louisiana's bankers must be ready to accept the challenge to provide financial support for a state economy that will "stagger the imagination."

This was the key message delivered Monday by J. Grayson Guthrie, Monroe, president of the Louisiana Bankers Association. The association is holding its 65th convention at the Jung Hotel.

"The collective power of the bankers of Louisiana has been well established," said Guthrie.

"Make no mistake about it, we can become one of the dominant factors in placing Louisiana at the very top of our 50 states in every area. All we need to do is combine our human resources with our financial and natural resources. We cannot afford economic ignorance or wasteful neglect of our God-given abundance."

CHAIR PROPOSED

In an interview, Guthrie said there is a shortage of officer material for the state's banks. "One of our resolutions to be voted on Tuesday will concern creating a chair of banking at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge," he said. "This would aid in coming up with officer material."

Guthrie said he broke into banking in 1929 with the Central Savings Bank and Trust Co., Monroe, as a runner and messenger. He is now executive vice-president.

"Yes, there have been quite a few changes from those days," admitted Guthrie. "It's switched from hand-posting to automation, a lot of other things."

"Will automation put the white collar bank employee out of work? No, you're still going to have to have the individual employee to do the large share of the work."

Guthrie said he does not feel banks are becoming too large. "It seems the larger the bank," said Guthrie, "the more the bank realizes the importance of public relations."

In his speech, Guthrie made these observations:

"National legislation appears to be necessary in order that Louisiana banks may be on a more equal basis with savings and loan associations."

"SOME REVISION"

"Apparently, there will be some revision in the idle Funds law in the coming session of the Legislature, but the nature of the change is not clear at the moment."

"The student loan program had a very good start last year. There are some features that need adjustment; however, we certainly feel that advantages outweigh undesirable features. With good cooperation from our member banks, there will be no need for the proposed Federal Loan programs to higher education in Louisiana."

"We must not be reluctant to take an active part in the political life of Louisiana. Too long have bankers sat idly by, taking a passive or defensive attitude, and the latter only when necessity demanded."

Archie K. Davis, vice-president of the American Bankers Association, Winston-Salem, N.C., warned there are several pieces of banking legislation before Congress with, if adopted, "would lead to complete centralization of our banking system and elimination of our great dual banking tradition."

IN SINGLE AGENCY

"Most of this legislation vests all supervisory, examining and insurance functions of American banks in a single federal agency."

Davis said the growth and development of the dual banking system in the United States - state and national banking - had its beginning here. He said the Bank of Louisiana was chartered in 1945 and "and during the same year the first branch bank of the United States was also established in New Orleans."

The convention, which has drawn more than 500 bankers and wives from 213 state association banks, concludes Tuesday with addresses by Gov. John J. McKeithen and Joseph W. Barr, recently appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, Undersecretary of the Treasury.