Fifth Judge Is Added To Lighten District Load

The 15th Judicial District, comprising the parishes of Acadia, Lafayette, and Vermilion, ranked second in the state last year in the number of persons per judge, according to the (1972) Annual Report of the Judicial Council of the Supreme Court of Louisiana.

To lighten the larger workload borne by the four justices who served the district last year — Carrol L. Spell, Charles T. Everett, Lucien C. Bertrand Jr., and Douglas J. Nehrbass — Allen Babineaux was elected as the fifth judge (Division E) in balloting last November.

Until Babineaux began serving his term in January, each of the four judges represented 53,760 persons. That ratio was topped only by District 30 (Beauregard and Vernon Parishes), which is represented by one judge who served 76,582 people.

Large Dockets

 Representing the fifth largest district according to population, the 15th has also featured large dockets during past years, but unfortunately for purposes of comparison with other districts and with previous years' statistics, the parishes of Acadia and Lafayette did not submit complete statistical data for the 1972 court year, the report notes.

The report explained, “In the district courts it might appear that there was a continuation of the trend noted in last year’s report concerning a reduction in the number of civil and criminal cases filed statewide. Since several courts did not provide complete statistical data for this court year, however, it would probably be more accurate to suggest that no significant increase or decrease in filings occurred.”

(Lafayette and Acadia Parishes were the only two which did not turn in the needed information.)

Data Lacking

Because the data is lacking, a comparison among the past three years would indicate, as the report says, that the district featured a substantial drop in the number of cases filed.

Some 3,995 were filed in '72 in Lafayette Parish, as opposed to 6,315 in '71, and 7,948 in '70. Acadia dropped from 4,159 in '70, and 2,303 in '71, to 3,170 last year; and Vermilion had 1,859 in '70, 1,569 in '71, and 1,768 in '72.

The total number of those cases which were terminated during those years included:

- Lafayette — 7,719 in '70, 5,055 in '71, and 5,476 in '72; Acadia — 2,096 in '70, 2,274 in '71, and 2,485 in '72; and Vermilion — 842 in '70, 900 in '71, and 886 in '72.

Separated into civil and criminal cases, there were 4,906 cases filed in criminal court last year, and 6,085 terminated. And there were 4,027 civil cases filed, with 2,762 being terminated.

Jury Trials

Statewide last year, there seemed to be a trend toward fewer jury trials, with the number of judge trials growing by six per cent, and the number of jury trials decreasing by 18 per cent.

In the district, there were 20