Good Start for Constitution

Not one word has been written for the proposed new Louisiana constitution, nor will there be for quite a while, yet the prognosis is good at this point.

The favorable evidence comes in bits and pieces as delegates complete their adoption of rules, elect their officials and prepare to start digging on committee work.

In general, the atmosphere of the convention at Baton Rouge has been one of unhurriedness. And, while this makes those fidgety who might yearn for steamroller efficiency, the impression is that delegates are determined to give fellow citizens a document of basic law that is thoroughly drawn to overcome the shortcomings of the present 52-year-old Constitution.

Here listed are a few of the favorable omens as we see them:

—Prime responsibility. Action has been taken to place decision-making with the delegates, not a staff of professional researchers. The staff will be working for delegates, not vice versa.

—Deliberateness. Full discussion of the convention rules has made some politicians edgy, if not testy. This deliberateness is good augury for the drafting process to come.

—Fairness. Expansion of the Executive Committee from seven to 23 to give fuller representation to minority groups gives the appearance of fairness. And the 122-7 vote underlines it.

—Openness. There have been repeated avowals to include the public in the process from start to finish. One such piece of evidence was in the vote to authorize holding of committee hearings and meetings on the Louisiana hospital TV network at no cost. The closed-circuit network serves 10 major areas of the state.

—Liveliness of interest. Instead of droning on monotonously, convention sessions have been scenes of spirited debate—manifestations of mission and concern.

If initial meetings have consumed more time than many expected, this is susceptible of interpretation that delegates want to do a good job, free of mistakes such as frequently occur in legislative chambers in the pell-mell rush of the closing days of session.

In building the organizational foundation for the important work of construction of a new constitution, delegates' determination is judged as impressive.