Henry Asks 'Time, Patience' For Delegates

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Louisiana's Speaker of the House E.L. "Bubba" Henry, who also is chairman of the state's recently called constitutional convention, last night asked that citizens grant the constitution delegates "time, patience and consideration."

"Don't be too critical because we spend a week drafting the rules," Henry said in an address before the Lafayette Jaycees at their annual Distinguished Service Awards Banquet at the Lafayette Petroleum Club.

"No one is going to control these delegates — no governor, no matter how smart he is, and no insurance commissioner. No one is!" he emphatically said.

Sees Problems

"We're going to have our problems," he said, in asking the state to be conscious of the task at hand and considerate of the inherent problems associated with writing a new document of government for Louisiana.

Henry used a parallel analysis to get his point across. He recalled the problems which faced those who drafted the United States Constitution, noting that time was an enemy of those colonial constitutional architects, that compromise was exercised then as it will be in drafting Louisiana's new constitution, and that there was political pressure exerted by delegates from provincial regions of the Colonies, just as he predicted there will be in drafting the state's constitution.

Meetings Dull

Constitutional committee meetings are going to be dull, at times, but highly important, according to Henry. He said the sessions will be open to the news media who will report committee findings and decisions which may seem trite to the public. Henry warned the public not to be fooled though, because what may appear to be slow and menial action is all part of drafting the document.

Henry termed the convention an opportunity of a lifetime for Louisiana. "We'll never get the chance again if we fumble the ball right now," he told the 50 or so racees and their guests last night.

"We're going to have an atmosphere so that they (the delegates) can "deliberate."" Henry promised in assuring the Jaycees that no pressure or control would be allowed by anyone in government toward the convention.

"Extremely Pleased"

"I'm extremely pleased, and extremely impressed with the people you have sent to the convention," he said in praise of the convention delegates.

Henry claimed that he was "in the middle" on the issues being discussed by delegates, and told the Jaycees that he would not make any comments on the issues "at this time."

The 36-year-old Jonesboro-Hodge lawyer-legislator said of the present state constitution: "It's the longest and has lasted the longest, and Lord, is it long and confusing."

Henry talked about 10 minutes during his 29-minute address about the state's legislature.

"We heard your message when you said the 'Louisiana Hayride' has got to stop," he said, referring to the recent state elections in which many old Louisiana political officeholders were turned away from their former jobs by landslide margins. He noted the reorganization of the House's business procedures as a "step in the right direction."

Henry said the House now has but 12 sergeants-at-arms, whereas before he became speaker, the House had 50 in the job. "We've saved the state $50,000 by cutting unnecessary employees in the House," he claimed.

"I think the governor is conscientious," Henry added. "This is the kind of motivation we (legislators) need."