La. Public Service Body May Face Reapportioning

Equal Representation to All Voters Required

The Louisiana Public Service Commission, a powerful political agency since Huey Long's day, may be forced to reapportion itself along with the Legislature and state congressional districts.

Under the one-man, one-vote doctrine recently laid down by the United States Supreme Court, state legislatures and congressional districts are being forced to reapportion to afford equal representation to all voters.

The doctrine is based on the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees equal protection of the laws to all citizens.

Under this theory, a citizen is denied equal protection if his vote carries less weight than another man's because he lives in a more populous political subdivision.

COULD BE EXTENDED

The court ruling on voting districts could be extended to other realms of state government, affecting such Louisiana bodies as the state supreme court and the public service commission.

A further extension of the doctrine might reach local government such as city and parish governing bodies.

The three elected members of the Louisiana Public Service Commission would be affected by any such extension.

There is a wide gap between the 41.4 per cent population in the Second district and the approximate 29 per cent in each of the other two districts.

The First District, centered around New Orleans, has 949,052 persons or 29.1 per cent of the state's population. The Third District has 959,159 or 29.5 per cent.

1,348,811 IN DISTRICT 2

The large Second District encompasses 1,348,811 persons.

The present districts are established by the state constitution. It includes no requirement for periodic reapportionment, although such a requirement is included for the legislature.

An attempt apparently was made to divide the Second and Third districts into a nearly equal number of parishes. The Second has 29 and the Third 28.

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An alternative would be to allow candidates for such bodies to run at-large over the state, rather from individual districts.

However, the defense of administrative and judicial functions would not be open to municipal government bodies which formulate laws, such as police juries and municipal councils.

An even further extension of the doctrine could reach to appointive officials who represent individual areas, such as the state highway board.

DIVIDED INTO DISTRICTS

Here is how the Public Service Commission is now divided into three districts:

First District - Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John. Total 948,062.