New Federal Judge May Be Allotted To Louisiana

Within a few days Congress is expected to pass legislation creating 45 additional federal judgeships on appellate and district levels. About three weeks ago, the House Judiciary committee reported out the measure favorably (the Senate passed it last term), so that the House should be calling it from the calendar very shortly.

One of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals seats is earmarked for Louisiana, which now has only one. It is understandable, therefore, that the logrolling has long started to have the judgeship allocated to the New Orleans-Eastern District area. However, the holder of the other appellate judgeship is from New Orleans, as was his predecessor.

For that reason we would like to put in our recommendation that the second judgeship be given to South Louisiana or, at the very least, the Western District. Assuming that qualified lawyers or members of the federal or state judiciary are available, it is only a matter of fairness that our area receive consideration for this vital and prestigious post. Certainly, such an important, lifetime appointment can not be parcelled out as part of a factional political "understanding."

With New Orleans having been tapped for the last two appellate judgeships, it would appear that the powers-that-be would look favorably toward our section in giving preference to another appointee. Insofar as qualifications are concerned, we have two members of the judiciary in our immediate area, both of them eminently qualified, and both of whom have been under consideration.

Already on the appeals level is Presiding Judge Albert Tate Jr., of the Louisiana Court of Appeals, Third District, Lake Charles. Tate is from Ville Platte and is highly respected among the judiciary as the other nominee, Richard J. Putnam. Putnam, a native of Abbeville, is on the federal level, serving as United States District Judge of the Lafayette Division. Edwin F. Hunter, Lake Charles, U.S. District Judge, Western Division, is a third jurist who deserves strong consideration.

It does not always follow that such federal appointments are made from the ranks of judges, either on the state or federal level. Several times in the past these federal posts have been filled by members of the judiciary with no prior experience on the bench. More logically, however, these posts are more in the public interest when they are manned by attorneys whose juridical background extends to having served as judges.

We hope that the appointing authorities will not brush aside these or any other qualified aspirants from South Louisiana and sacrifice them to political expediency. Putnam or Tate or Hunter can bring to the judgeship long years of experience, an unswerving sense of ethics, and justifiable pride to the sector that claims them as native sons.