Paralysis of La. Courts Is Foreseen by Expert

Suggestions Are Offered by N.Y. Barrister

Continued maintenance of the judicial system existing in Louisiana will ultimately paralyze the courts, a legal expert predicted Tuesday.

Speaking was Robert D. Lipscher, associate director of the Institute of Judicial Administration in New York City.

He addressed nearly 200 participants in the Louisiana Judicial Administrator's Conference on the Courts, being held through Wednesday at the Fontainebleau Motor Hotel.

The Institute of Judicial Administration recently staffed an eight-month study of Louisiana courts, commissioned by Chief Justice E. Howard McCaleb of the Louisiana Supreme Court. "Louisiana courts are now decentralized and fragmented," Lipscher said. Problems arising from this situation, he said, are that physical facilities are often inadequate and a management vacuum exists at the state and local level.

"SYSTEM UNTIMELY"

"The courts as they are now organized are incapable of responding to the demands of the 20th century," he said. "Judges are doing an excellent job, but the system as a whole is in a long battle with the demands of time."

As a solution, Lipscher suggested formation of a better balanced judiciary, with centralized planning and support services, but decentralized court operations.

The state judiciary could, in this way, gain independence and end its reliance on local political systems, he said.

In a variation on the same theme, Associate Justice Joseph W. Sanders of the Louisiana Supreme Court said the number of both civil and criminal cases filed in Louisiana district courts is rising.

"The judicial record in criminal justice is not one to which we can point with pride," he said. "Deficiencies in facilities, personnel and administration have handicapped many courts as agencies of fair and speedy justice."

5-MONTH LAPSE

If there is any deterrence in the criminal law, he said, "it arises from the quick arrest and prompt sentencing of those found guilty." But the median time from arrest to trial in felony cases in Louisiana is about five months, he noted.

Crime is costing Louisiana more than $500 million annually, according to some estimates, Judge Sanders said. "Enough to build 30,000 new homes each year for our needy families."

Yet the state spends less for its entire court system than it does for its Wildlife and Fisheries Department, another speaker said. He was Judge Luther F. Cole of the 19th Judicial District, East Baton Rouge Parish.

PRISONS LACK

On the national level, "no area in the administration of criminal justice lacks more than the prisons," said a fourth speaker, Chief Judge Jack G. Day of the Ohio Court of Appeals and vice chairman of the criminal law section of the American Bar Association.

"If we (through the prisons) turn a man into a monster, then he's going to behave like one," Judge Day warned.

The conference, the first of its kind in the state, is being sponsored for the information of leaders through Louisiana, by State Judicial Administrator Eugene Murret, and several legal associations and law schools.

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