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Depressed by weakening real estate markets, U.S. banks' income fell 34.1 percent in 1989 to $15.8 billion, according to a report issued Tuesday by Sheshunoff Information Services Inc., a Texas firm that tracks bank performance.

Louisiana banks collectively lost $33 million in 1989, compared to earning $11.6 million in 1988, Sheshunoff reported.

It was one of six states reporting collective bank losses, led by New York, where banks lost $3.1 billion; Texas, with losses of $567 million; and Arizona, with losses of $491 million, the firm said.

Among the Louisiana banks reporting losses were the $4.2 billion-asset Premier Bancorp, based in Baton Rouge, which reported a $105.6 million 1989 loss, and the $2.8 billion-asset Whitney Holding Corp., based in New Orleans, which reported a $60 million 1989 loss.

Nationwide, money center banks accounted for a large share of the decline in earnings, Sheshunoff reported. Eleven of the 44 U.S. banks with more than $10 billion in assets lost money in 1989.

Of the 10 largest U.S. banks, the seven based in New York with combined assets of $508.2 billion lost $3.7 billion, stemming primarily from increased loan loss reserves for loans to developing countries.

Sheshunoff president Alex Sheshunoff characterized the industry's 1989 performance as "disappointing, but hardly surprising in view of the speculative excesses building up in the real estate sector, particularly in the Northeast.

"Future problems will stem from speculative excesses in real estate and leveraged buyouts," he said.

Despite the overall drop in income, 88 percent of the nation's 12,707 banks were profitable, earning $24.5 billion in 1989, the firm reported. The unprofitable 12 percent lost $8.7 billion. By comparison, in 1988, 86 percent of a total 13,066 banks were profitable, earning $28.3 billion. The unprofitable banks that year lost $4.3 billion.

Real estate lending generated most of the growth in bank loan portfolios in 1989, the firm reported. Meanwhile, loan problems rose precipitously in the Northeast in 1989, the company said. Nevertheless, net charge-offs remained most acute in the Southwest where 1.92 percent of loans were charged off in 1989.

Louisiana banks charged off $326 million in 1989, or 18.3 percent less than the $399 million charged-off the year before.

Total loans among Louisiana banks declined 0.1 percent to $19.7 million in 1989 from the year before, Sheshunoff reported.

Reflecting the region's troubled real estate markets, nonperforming real estate loans more than doubled in eight of the Northeast's nine states, including increases of 504 percent in Connecticut and 233 percent in Massachusetts, Sheshunoff reported.

Nonperforming loans are at least 90 days past due or are not accruing interest.

In Louisiana, non-performing loans declined 16.1 percent to $746 million in 1989 from the year before. Arizona had the most serious real estate loan problems with 11.9 percent of real estate loans nonperforming followed by Texas with 10.5 percent, Massachusetts with 7 percent and Connecticut with 6.4 percent.

Three major consequences will emerge from the problems facing the U.S. banking industry, Sheshunoff said.

- Real estate lending will be curtailed. Without easy financing, property values will decline "to more reasonable levels in many markets. The outlook is for more affordable housing and lower commercial rents," he said.

- High interest rates may well become a fact of life as the cost estimates of the thrift bailout continue to escalate.

- Deposit insurance reform will emerge as a major issue along with public demands for closer supervision of those institutions that rely upon insured deposits.