

Employers-Commercial Union

Insurance Group Headquarters To Be In Ruston

As the world's largest international chain-Employers-Commercial Union-expands its local operation to become the Gulf Regional headquarters, Ruston is getting a new payroll of \$750,000 and jobs for 125 people.

The merger of the Ruston and New Orleans offices was announced in November and is scheduled for completion soon, according to local manager Lawson L. Swearingen, regional manager.

New Orleans was the former Gulf Region headquarters.

Swearingen says that construction to add 20,000 square feet of office space to the 15,000

foot office on I-20 will begin soon. Some of the key personnel will be moved into Ruston, but most of the labor pool will come from local hires, Swearingen said. This will be mostly women clerical workers.

One of the main reasons for locating in Ruston, he said, was that it placed the company close to high quality workers. He said that the Ruston unit over the years had experienced good labor relations and that the company's staff here took pride in their work.

There were other factors, he said, too. Ruston places the office geographically at the

center of the service area which includes Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and West Tennessee.

L. A. Hamilton and J. F. Duguid will be assistant regional managers under Swearingen. The addition of 125 workers will bring the company's Ruston force to 195. Last February the company moved into its new quarters on I-20.

The former Gulf Region director, A. T. Bowen of New Orleans and his assistant E. C. Bajorek will transfer to Dallas to head the new Southwest Region Department to serve the Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico markets.

Parish Forests Attracts Industries

Lincoln Parish in 1970 continued to show substantial gains in attracting forest products industries and it continued also as an area of timber growth.

In 1965 the United States Department of Agriculture published its latest forest survey showing 72.8 percent of the Lincoln land area of 300.2 thousand acres was in forests.

The total, the survey said, was 218.4 acres in commercial forests.

By 1970, the sale of timber from Lincoln land totaled \$1,147,967 stumpage value and \$2,500,000 mill value. (Figures are from Louisiana Severance Tax reports.)

A major breakthrough in the economic value of forestry here was seen in the late fall when Huey Roberson of Chatham

announced the construction of a \$500,000 all-electric sawmill at Simsboro, and then on December 30, a \$7-million particle board plant was announced also near Simsboro by a combine of Oregon and North Louisiana firms.

The sawmill has been in production a few months and site preparation is underway for the particleboard plant.

For years Lincoln Parish has lost only small acreages of timber to forest fires, and last year there were 33 fires which burned 115 acres.

Roberson is a native of Hico in Lincoln Parish and after serving in World War II, went into the timber business with his brother and father. He logged in Colorado and New Mexico, and in 1958 became a logging contractor for the Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation supplying its Winnfield sawmill and later its plywood, sawmill, and pulp chip operations there. His logging company handles 18 million feet of pine a year.

He said he chose the Simsboro location for a sawmill because of its geographic location, its "tremendous possibilities for growth", and because of the assistance with planning given by local business and financial leaders.

The sawmill was designed to cut 30-35 thousand feet a day with the major portion being

hardwoods. E. L. Bruce Flooring Company of Shreveport will take most of the hardwood. Kroehler Manufacturing Company of Shreveport will get most of the softwoods, and Moss American Company of Bossier will receive the hearts of the logs and cross ties.

On December 30, Duraflake South, Inc., announced it would construct a \$7-million particleboard plant which would use 200 tons of sawmill shavings, plywood trim, and sawdust daily, converting this into compressed board for construction purposes.

The plant will be constructed on 130 acres eight miles west of Ruston adjacent to the Laurens Glass Plant on Interstate Highway 20.

Williamette Industries, Inc., of Portland Oregon, Woodard-Walker Company of Taylor, La., and Hunt Lumber Company of Ruston, formed the new company.

Williamette Industries operates and manages three plywood mills located at Ruston (Santiam Southern), Minden, and Dodson, and it is a major producer of lumber and plywood, and particleboard in Oregon.

Woodard-Walker Lumber Company has lumber and plywood interests, and timber growing interests, in North Louisiana. Hunt Lumber Company, a Ruston-based firm operates sawmills at Dodson, Danville, and Zwolle, and other locations in North and Central Louisiana.

Named as production manager for the new plant is Harlan Walker, a native of Dallas, Texas.

Prior to joining Duraflake South, Walker managed the Silsbee, Texas particleboard plant of Evans Products Company. He is a graduate of the University of Texas.

The president of Duraflake is William Swindells, Jr., the vice presidents are G. D. Knudes and Sam C. Wheeler, and the secretary-treasurer is A. R. Morgans. Directors include Alex T. Hunt, Sr., Ruston, and Odell Walker of Woodard-Walker Lumber Company.

Parish Livestock Values \$5,250,000

County Agent F. O. LaVasseur estimates that the total agriculture business in Lincoln Parish during 1970 amounted to \$7,354,523.

Some figures are actual sales figures compiled by his office and the Louisiana Crop Reporting Service.

The sale of beef cattle totaled \$775,000 in 1970 and the sale of cull dairy and surplus dairy cattle totaled \$38,000.

Milk sales ran to \$595,000 and the broiler market provided about \$3.50 million, and the peach crop at \$599,250.

In all, livestock totaled \$5,250,000 he says.

Timber sales totaled \$1,147,967 stumpage value and \$2,500,000 mill value.

"Most of the agriculture income represents a second income for the families benefitting from it," Le Vasseur said. "We

have some families primarily engaged in agriculture, but most of them who have farm projects also have other income from employment outside the farm. This of course means they really are in a stronger position by reason of their farm projects."

He said the figures presented were fairly conservative. "We have found in the past that some of our figures needed adjusting upward, but we haven't yet changed our methods for arriving at the figures," he explained.

Agronomy crops increased about 10 percent during the year.

Of the 300,160 acres in Lincoln Parish, LeVasseur's figures show the following usage: (figures are not 1970).

800 farm ponds covering 1,160 acres; cities, towns, highways and other right of ways 13,000; cultivation 7,000; pastures 19,000; idle 9,000 and timber 251,000.

Mayor Of Ruston Appreciates Support Of People



Mayor Johnny Perritt sees 1970 as one of Ruston's best years. "While most of the city government's daily functions are in the area of providing services (streets, fire, police, sanitation, utilities), I think that we can say that it is a credit that we have people in the city who understand our growth presents needs which fortunately they are continuing to meet," Perritt said.

He listed as major governmental accomplishments the million dollar public bond issue voted here in October to construct a power feeder line around the city.

"It is encouraging to live where people recognize needs like this arise and then they support the government when it tries to meet the need," Perritt said.

He noted that the population increase (now at 19,296 according to a special city census and 17,365 according to the federal census) meant that the Ruston needed to move quickly to keep abreast of providing the services needed.

Currently, a survey of the sewerage treatment facilities is being made by a firm of engineers. This survey is intended to determine what can be done to increase the treatment capacities of the two sewerage treatment plants.

Early indications are that overhauling the plants can make them provide the services needed. Currently, during peak months, the plants are taxed to provide the capacity needed.

Growth in the use of electricity for the past few decades has required that about each six years, additional generation capacity must be added to the plant.

A city Council Committee headed by Councilman W.A.J. (Billy) Lewis has been asked to

survey the electric situation and report to the City Council.

Perritt said this survey is expected to show that additional generation capacity will be needed within the next 2-5 years. If so, plans would have to be made soon to begin the increase in generating capacity.

Perritt sees the national fuel shortage as giving the city one of its most difficult problems.

Natural gas is used to generate power and it is being bought under a contract for 30 cents per thousand cubic feet. This contract has three more years after 1971 to run. At that time, the city will have to renegotiate its gas contract.

But in 1969 and again in 1970, cold weather brought on heavy increases in fuel consumption on the East Coast. The result was that during peak use periods, industrial users had their gas rationed. The Ruston generating plant is classed as an industrial user and felt the rationing too.

When the gas is rationed, supplemental fuel oil is used to fire the boilers for generating electricity. This oil costs more than gas and means that the profits from the operation of the system are less.

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Increased costs of operation during 1969-70 resulted in \$100,000 less money available for these services. A substantial portion of this increase was due to the shortage of gas, Perritt said.

There has been no significant change in electric rates here in about 25-30 years. There have been adjustments, mostly downward or to account for large consumption locations both residential and commercial.

This follows the pattern nationwide in which electric rates have generally continued to decrease.

If the power generating plants in the country continue to feel increased fuel costs, power rates may have to go up, says Perritt. Some generating facilities have customer rates which account for increases in generating fuel costs. When costs of fuel go up, the rates go up. Ruston rates are

not based in this manner. There were other improvements during 1970.

A bath house and concession stand at the Memorial Park Pool was built at a cost exceeding \$28,000.

The State of Louisiana let contract for an \$800,000 project to make West Alabama Avenue four lanes wide from Trenton Street for a distance 1.7 miles west.

"We are particularly pleased to have Sen. Charles Barham and Rep. George Holstead work this out for us," Perritt said. West Alabama is part of the State Highway System.

"We are also working on a lower fire insurance rating plan which we hope may be worked out this year in Ruston. I'm not sure now just which details we may lack, but we are working on it," Perritt said.

Also in 1971 he said the City hopes to develop some kind of timetable on construction of a city hall office building. It already owns the property adjacent to the Post Office.

He said that the administration supports local merchants and the Ruston Jaycees, Louisiana Tech fraternities and sororities in their efforts to do some facilitating of buildings in the city. This project began February 9.

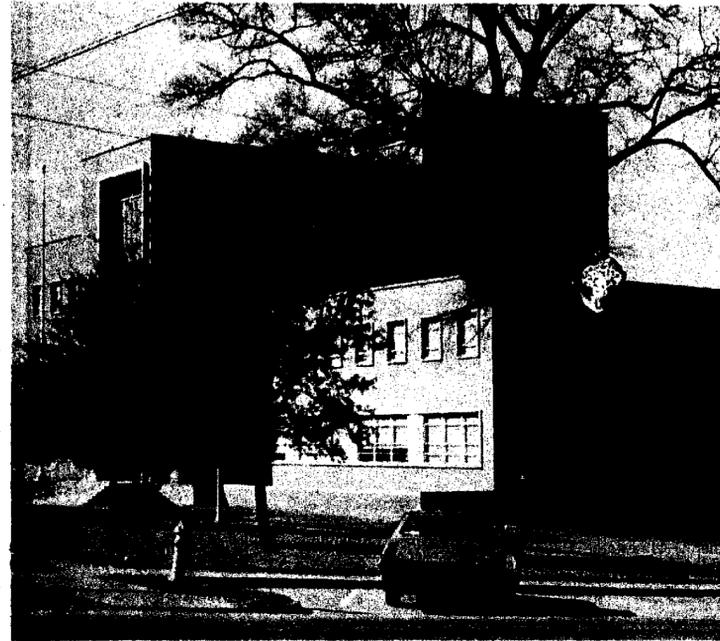
"We almost completed overlaying all city streets in 1970 and we will do the remaining 2.5 miles this spring as soon as the temperature rises and weather clears," Perritt noted.

During the year, the city bought right of way on Monroe Street between the Rock Island Railroad and the business buildings on Monroe between Park Avenue and Georgia. It then completed overlaying Monroe from Mississippi to Georgia Street.

The 1970-71 budget provided funds for adding two men to the Police Department.

"We are looking toward getting the I-20 service roads opened between the east and west city limit lines during the year. Of course this will have to be worked out with the state and the U.S. Bureau of Roads and it will take time," Perritt said.

"Generally, we had one of our better years, and I believe we will continue to enjoy prosperity. We are fortunate in having good people in the area who want to grow and to provide for the growth," he said.



Lincoln Parish Court House In Ruston

Bridges Under Construction

1970 Good Year, Dollar Wise

Dollar wise, 1970 was a big year for the Lincoln Parish Policy Jury.

It let a \$310,000 contract to reconstruct 89 spans of bridges during the year, and in conjunction with the Lincoln General Hospital Board, received public approval of a plan for a \$4.1 million hospital expansion.

"Dollar wise, we had the biggest year in roadbuilding," Jury Secretary Ragan Sutton said.

"We have 485 miles of parish road and 70 percent of this is under hard surfaces. We surface 16 miles each year and prepare 16 additional miles for surfacing. We plan to prepare 18 miles this year. From start to finish, it costs \$14,000 to \$16,000 a mile to prepare and surface a road," he explained.

Lincoln in the second year of

a major improvement project authorized by the State Department of Highways on bridge work. The 89 spans under contract will be part of the three year project. This spring there will be a contract let for an additional 29 spans, and next year approximately that many more will be contracted.

Late in 1970 the Library Board and the Police Jury began a project to add work space and a rear entrance at the library in Ruston. The jury constructed a parking lot on the south side and this was put into use in October.

Contract for the \$7,962 project to add floor space to the library was let in January 1971.

Construction of the hospital expansion is the largest single project ever undertaken by the Police Jury.

The hospital is owned by the

public and administered by a hospital board appointed by the Police Jury.

Presently, the Police Jury is preparing to sell \$3-billion in property bonds voted December 15, 1970 by nearly a 5-1 margin. It is attempting to meet a deadline for issuing a construction contract by July 1, 1971 so that it will receive a grant of \$800,000 in Hill Burton funds to assist in the construction.

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