

# Louisiana Law Review

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Volume 20 | Number 4

June 1960

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Paul M. Hebert

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### Repository Citation

Paul M. Hebert, *Mr. Chief Justice Fournet: Completion of a Quarter-Century of Judicial Service*, 20 La. L. Rev. (1960)

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**JOHN B. FOURNET**  
Chief Justice  
Supreme Court of Louisiana

## Mr. Chief Justice Fournet

### Completion of a Quarter-Century of Judicial Service

Temporary illness of Louisiana's Chief Justice forced a cancellation of plans that had been projected to honor Mr. Chief Justice Fournet on the completion of a significant judicial milestone during the 1960 Annual Meeting of the Louisiana State Bar Association. On January 2, 1960, the Honorable John B. Fournet completed twenty-five years of continuous service as a member of the Supreme Court of Louisiana. Though the planned testimonial dinner expressing the esteem in which the Chief Justice is held by the members of the legal profession could not be held, as the *Review* goes to press, it can be fortunately noted that he is rapidly recovering and is expected to resume the Bench in his usual good health and vigor with the opening of the forthcoming October term of the court. The *Louisiana Law Review* takes this means of expressing its felicitations to the Chief Justice on the noteworthy attainment of a quarter of a century of judicial service.

John Baptiste Fournet was born in St. Martinville, Louisiana, on July 27, 1895. After attending the public schools of his native area, he entered the Louisiana State Normal College from which he was graduated in 1915. Shortly thereafter the strong attraction of the law claimed him. Following service in World War I he entered Louisiana State University Law School; from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Laws in 1920. Entering the private practice in St. Martinville, he subsequently practiced in Baton Rouge and later moved to Jennings, Louisiana, where he was engaged in the practice until he ascended the Bench in 1935. While residing in Jennings, he was elected to the House of Representatives and served as Speaker of the House from 1928 to 1932. Elected Lieutenant Governor in 1932, he resigned before the completion of his term of office to assume the position of Associate Justice to which he was elected following the death of Judge Winston Overton. Upon the retirement of Chief Justice Charles A. O'Niell, at the age of eighty, on September 7, 1949, Justice Fournet succeeded to the Chief Justiceship. Thus his judicial career spans fifteen years as an associate justice and ten years as the Chief Justice.

In his opinion writing Chief Justice Fournet has made

marked contributions to the development of many aspects of Louisiana law. Especially noteworthy has been his judicial contributions to the mineral law. As Professor Harriet S. Daggett so aptly phrased it in citing the Chief Justice for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws from his alma mater in 1956: "Without subtracting in any way from other contributions to jurisprudence made by this jurist, emphasis must be placed on his creative art in the patient and continuous sculpture of the law of mineral rights. He had few measurements and perhaps even within his own mind and heart little knowledge of the size of the gigantic structure which he built so slowly and painstakingly." The judicial sculpture of which Mrs. Daggett was speaking is indeed reflected in his numerous opinions, the product of the long years of judicial service he has rendered. Obviously, limitations of time and of space do not permit even partial reference to his detailed doctrinal contributions found in the case law which ranges from Volume 180 through Volume 238 of the Louisiana Reports. The story of his tremendous impact upon the developing substantive Louisiana law of the last quarter-century will, therefore, have to be unfolded in its rich detail when a definitive and comprehensive study of his judicial work is undertaken.

Anyone making even brief editorial comment at this time would be remiss in his task if fitting tribute were not paid to the Chief Justice for the vast strides made by Louisiana in improving judicial administration during the past decade. This progress is the direct result of his drive and interest in removing as many as possible of the causes for dissatisfaction with the administration of justice. Louisiana's enviable place among the states in the nation-wide effort to relieve court congestion is due to measures he has visualized and administratively executed. Through his leadership, legal research assistance has been provided for the Supreme Court and appellate courts; the Judicial Council was organized to analyze and study the flow of judicial business in all of the courts; the office of Judicial Administrator was established to implement the work of the Judicial Council; a drive was initiated to place trial dockets throughout the state on a current basis; new administrative procedures to expedite the handling of appellate cases was undertaken; the appellate court structure was expanded and the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and courts of appeal was radically changed to meet the problems occasioned by the increased judicial business; and

a fitting Supreme Court Building to facilitate the work of the court has only recently been completed and dedicated. This brief and incomplete enumeration of accomplishments gives evidence of the tempo and variety of matters of real administrative concern to the courts and to the legal profession which have had the firm guiding hand and sustained interest of the Chief Justice during the past ten years.

The progress which has been made is an earnest for the future. The *Louisiana Law Review* joins with the Bench and with the Bar of Louisiana in expressing appreciation to the Chief Justice as he looks back upon the past twenty-five years so filled with fruitful accomplishments. Those efforts are shortly to be augmented by the coming into effect of Louisiana's new Code of Civil Procedure, a reform in the adjective law which will add new dimensions to the broad outlook in judicial administration for which the Chief Justice has been such a noted exponent. Louisiana's legal profession and its courts, thanks to the Chief Justice and his leadership, have much to point to with pride in the counsels of those who strive always to make the courts more effective instrumentalities for the adjustment of and adjudication of problems which can only be resolved by the role of law in our society. That role is performed when the courts are efficiently administered and sound procedural rules are observed. This dual specification is now virtually within the grasp of the legal profession in Louisiana.

The *Review* extends best wishes for the Chief Justice's speedy recovery and continued accomplishments in areas of vast importance to which he has already contributed so notably.

*Paul M. Hebert*  
*Dean*

Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
June 1960