Avoylees CODOFIL Unit Organized in Marksville

Domengeaux Addresses SRO Audience

By RUTH SANCHEZ

Marksville, La. — This 158-year-old town, the birthplace of Louisiana's French-speaking Gov. John Edwards, will be the stage for the renaissance of the French language in this rich parish of Avoylees.

A standing-room-only crowd, representing all areas of the parish, met Thursday night at the courthouse here to organize the 15th chapter of CODOFIL, an agency created by the state legislature to preserve, develop, and expand the French language in this Deep South state. Judge Earl H. Edwards of Marksville chaired the meeting.

Addressing the crowd was the state CODOFIL chairman, James Domengeaux, a former member of the state legislature. He said, "The U.S. will soon be forced to abandon its linguistic provincialism if this great nation does not want to become isolated in this fast shrinking world of instant communications."

He said Louisiana has an existing base of over 1 million of its population still speaking or understanding French on which to build a practical bilingualism in the state within the next 20 years.

Domengeaux said, if we don't get to this right now the language, within 10 years, will be lost forever to Louisiana. The school boards of the state have already put the teaching of French at the same footing as other priority subjects if the present bilingual awakening is to get the desired result.

The state chairman said, in September at least another 150 elementary teaching assistants from France will join the 100 already in the state. He said some 300 Louisiana natives, involved in teaching, will be studying this summer in France and Quebec.

Domengeaux said ours is a forward looking movement and the English segment of the state's population is 100 percent behind the movement. This is evident by their interest in placing these French teaching assistants in elementary schools. They understand this movement to be educational and cultural. "We are not using the rear view mirror, we are not trying to turn back the urer.

Another speaker was Adras LaBorde, editor of the Alexandria Town Talk. He is a native of Avoylees and a pioneer French language broadcaster.

LaBorde said, "It is the future that concerns us, however, tonight we have received the inspiration to make vows—that for each of us from this moment on, the preservation of the French language and the Acadian heritage will be project No. 1."

Entertainment entirely in French was staged by a group of elementary students who are participating in the French pilot program of the state Department of Education in conjunction with CODOFIL. Coordinating the program was Mrs. Beryl Depuy Quinn, a descendant of pioneer French families of the Marksville community.

Election of officers was held with Wayne LaBorde, teacher of French at Marksville High School, named president. Mrs. May Ray Cappell of Marksville, a retired French teacher, was named vice-president, Mrs. Blanche Arceneaux Swann of Marksville, secretary, and Stephen Ducote of Hessmer, treasurer.