Bi-lingual Program Sought to Rejuvenate Ethnic Tongue

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LAFAYETTE, La. A nationwide bi-lingual program "to rejuvenate the ethnic languages of the country could become our atomic weapon for peace," James Domengeaux, chairman of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, told members of the Foreign Language Association meeting in state convention at the University of Southwestern Louisiana here.

More than 130 members were in attendance at the convention, which was organized by Dr. Carlos Fandal of Monroe, head of the Department of Foreign Languages, Northeast State College.

Dr. Ernest Hayden, University of Texas at Austin, was also a featured speaker. He discussed linguistics and foreign languages.

Domengeaux, the luncheon speaker, told the group, "You will be the ones who will make or break the foreign language program in the state of Louisiana."

"I believe," he said, "that we are embarked on an experiment that could easily spread throughout the United States."

He said to assure success in rejuvenating ethnic languages that had been smothered in this country by the melting pot attitude following the Civil War, foreign language teachers needed state Department of Education help in making foreign languages a requirement in the curriculum.

"This nation is no longer a provincial nation," Domengeaux said, "and in a world that is shrinking day by day our greatest advantage, in my opinion, is the ability to communicate with the other nations of the world, and certainly language will give that, particularly to this state."

Domengeaux, basing his opinion on conferences that he has had with officials, said that he predicts the Congress will embark on a true program of bi-lingualism.

"This must be a straightforward program to bring back and rejuvenate the ethnic languages that were smothered by the melting pot philosophy. I believe if we can do that in this great nation, it could become our atomic weapon for peace."

Domengeaux said Louisiana is now leading this renaissance "and it is proper that it should. We have had, as a matter of fate and destiny, the opportunity to learn two languages with equal facility ... Regrettably we did not have the understanding or the vision to complement the language educationally so basically our language has become an oral language, but it is still and can still be a real foundation for the development of a true bi-lingualism, a true bi-lingual society within a reasonable time."

He said this must be a mass program requiring the recognition of this on the part of the legislature, public officials, local school boards and people in general.

The CODOFIL chairman outlined plans for the study of foreign language teachers in France and Canada this summer and also of students in Quebec. He spoke also of an exchange of teachers from France to study in Louisiana and to teach in the elementary grades.