CODOFIL director outlines group's impact in Lafayette

By BOB ANGERS
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CODA members learned Tuesday morning that CODOFIL has helped create 200 teaching jobs in Louisiana, stimulated tourism and developed several business enterprises in Lafayette.

Philippe Gustin, director of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, said that although the state agency's mandate was primarily educational there have been spinoff commercial benefits.

There was a shortage of Louisiana-trained elementary French teachers when CODOFIL was established, but now there are about 200 native instructors in the schools.

The director appeared before the northside civic group to review the impact CODOFIL is having on economic development and international trade and tourism.

CODA president Joey Babineaux served as presiding officer for the last time and announced that he will be turning the gavel over to Rod Hamilton as the 1987 leader. Other officers elected to serve with Hamilton are Mary Courville, vice president; Rickey Couvillion, secretary; and Pat Breaux, treasurer.

Gustin traced the evolution of CODOFIL since its formation in 1968. He said there was a shortage of Louisiana-trained elementary French teachers when English, he observed.

Gustin said a national commission surveying education recommended international studies, an increase in foreign language instruction and a more demanding curriculum to make Americans more competitive with other countries.

Southern governors meeting in Atlanta this year also encouraged an educational system that would prepare Americans to meet conditions that exist in the world marketplace, Gustin said. He told the CODA members that during 1984 alone southern states exported $52 billion in finished goods and foreign countries invested $82 million in the same region.

"American exports amount to one fourth of the U.S. gross national product and foreign trade is responsible for one in six jobs in this country," Gustin told the northsiders.

He encouraged exploitation of the French heritage found in Acadiana. Gustin noted that the Quebec office in Lafayette is the only foreign government office in Louisiana outside of New Orleans. He said that Louisiana and Quebec are the greatest producers of furs on the North American continent and suggested a closer commercial tie.

The twinning of Lafayette with Poitiers, France has resulted in establishment of a French distribution here to sell wine and cognac, Gustin said. A relationship established between firemen from France and Lafayette may result in a major French manufacturer of security equipment locating a plant in the Hub City, he added.

"There must be a coordinated effort by all engaged in the international field," Gustin recommended.

CODOFIL has a staff of eight in the Lafayette office and is governed by a 15-member board chaired by James Domengeaux. Louisiana's austerity program will mean a budget of $227,000 for the council in the next fiscal year.

Hamilton noted that the Lafayette Parish corner's budget of more than $400,000 exceeded CODOFIL's statewide administrative allocation.