CODOFIL Urges Ties To French-Speaking Africa

By KEN GRISSOM
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ABBEVILLE — James Domengeaux, chairman of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL), used the occasion of a Canadian diplomat’s visit to turn the focus of Acadian international ties to still another French-speaking area — Africa.

Speaking at a supper here last night honoring Jean-Charles Cantin, Canadian consul-general to the southern tier of states, Domengeaux urged the nurturing of the French language among Louisiana’s young people, especially blacks, for the advantage it would give them in the under-developed nations of Africa.

Continental Opening Up

“If I were a young black today, or if I were a black parent, I would insist my children were educated adequately and competently in the French language,” Domengeaux said. “That continent is just opening up. There will be positions in government work and private firms moving in there and they will be looking for people that speak good French to fill them.”

The consul-general told the audience of about 100 bilinguists in A.A. Comeaux Recreation Center that he hoped Quebec’s gift of $15,000 to CODOFIL would not be taken as an insult.

“We are a bilingual country and we are proud of it,” Cantin said, “and any country that should want to follow in our footsteps, it is our friend and we will help.”

He said it is not a matter of an affluent country helping a needy one.

“The U.S. is ahead economically and technologically. It’s just because you’re trying so hard to develop French that we want to help.”

Hits School Board

Domengeaux also delivered another in a series of broadsides aimed at area school boards and school superintendents. He acknowledged the presence of Vermilion board members Milton Reese and Dalton Domingue and member-elect Noah Langlinais in the audience and asked “where are the other members? Where is the superintendent?”

He said Acadiana’s French heritage provides a strong background for the development of the language, “but if you cannot establish in the school this priority we cannot win this battle and in my mind we are going to lose the French language in 10 years. C’est fini. C’est foutu.”

The Cantin-Domengeaux entourage began its Vermilion tour with ceremonies at the Abbeville city hall. Other stops included a lunch and introduction to the oil industry in Intracoastal City and a visit to Kaplan, where the consul-general spoke with Cajun residents and received a key to the city.

To help monolingual news media understand the predominantly French proceedings, the government of Quebec provided an interpreter, France Lemay. Miss Lemay is secretary to Leo LeBlanc, Quebec’s emissary to Acadiana.

CANADIAN HONORED — Jean-Charles Cantin, left, consul-general of the government of Quebec in the South, listens as CODOFIL Chairman James Domengeaux addresses a group honoring the Canadian in Abbeville last night. Other speakers at the all-French event were Alden Soirez, Vermilion chairman of CODOFIL, state Sen. James Fontenot, state Rep. Warren Simon, Sheriff Euda Delcambre and a valiant effort from the mono-lingual mayor of Abbeville, Jimmie Vorhoff Jr., center. (Advertiser Staff Photo)