BERNARD DORE AND GEORGE BERTRAND  
“Cajun” French Works For Paris Law Student  

CROWLEY, La. - “There is actually no difference in the French that is spoken in Louisiana and that which is spoken in France. Many people in each area seem to hold to the misconception that the “Cajun” French is inferior but it is not true,” stated Bernard Dore, a 21-year-old law student from Paris, France.

Dore, who is presently working with the Association Technique Interministerielle Des Transports, Mission d’Etudes Louisiana, is currently involved in making a survey of Louisiana in conjunction with the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (Codefl). This survey is being conducted to determine the feasibility of locating people from France in Louisiana and to promote contacts between this state and France.

“Codefl is promoting the continuation of the French language in Louisiana for two main reasons,” Dore said. “One being the traditionally French culture and secondly, the fact that Louisiana’s economic growth should make it one of the most important states in the nation in the next 20 years. The latter reason is based on the state’s location, abundant water supply and natural resources. Therefore, this state, of necessity, should be bilingual,” he noted.

A state with two or more languages has more advantages for the future because as the world becomes smaller, there will be a communication need among different language speaking peoples. The idea of bringing together peoples from all walks of life, mix and mingle with the Acadian French will further this aspect.

Codefl and the Association chose this area for the survey because the French language has already been established. About 1 million people speak French today in the state of Louisiana. In Acadia Parish, alone, 80 percent of the population is French speaking.

And the fact that Louisiana sends more people, both, young people and adults, to France every year makes it an international state on an international level.

While in Crowley, Dore is the guest of George Bertrand. He met Bertrand while the latter was studying at the University of Montpellier in Southern France this past summer. The six-week study course, which was sponsored and paid for by the French government, dealt with the development of better methods of teaching French to adults.

At the present time, Bertrand is working in cooperation with the State Department of Education in attempting to develop French language courses for adults. “Anyone from Louisiana who visited in France and spoke the French language should be understood perfectly,” Dore reiterated. He stressed that he has been able to understand everyone he has spoken to while on his tour of Southwest Louisiana and has conversed with them well.

“Of course, there are a few slang words and so forth that are different but, on the whole, the two dialects are very much the same. My main difficulty has been in convincing people’s converse with me in French. They seem to be ashamed of their language and this should not be. This is another of the purposes of my trip — to educate the local French people that they should not be ashamed of their language.”

The older generation has tried to protect their children and old, to foreign countries, the embarrassment of having to be taught French when they started school. As a result, the children are not learning the French language at the ages it is more easily taught. Therefore, in France in Louisiana was on the verge of dying out.

“Now, thanks to Codefl and other interested citizens, it has been revived. Children are now taught that it is not a disgrace to speak French and they are taught to be proud of the language. This part of the country has progressed to the point where two languages are a necessity rather than a luxury.”

In France, English is taught on the elementary level in addition to the native tongue. In high school, students are required to take two additional languages, such as German, Spanish, Italian or Russian.

“Everyone must study English by the day of 16. Dore said. “However, they have no English basis or manner in which to practice the language outside of the classroom. Whereas in South Louisiana, the children have a basis for French study through day by day practice and contact with French speaking people.”

Dore says his survey to recover Louisiana. Dore hopes to learn all he can about the people of the bayou country in particular. He also would like to determine the possibilities of locating jobs for French people as well as the attitudes of the Louisiana French towards their brothers from France.

Dore feels that one must live in a country for a certain amount of time before one can really know and understand the people. “To get to know the people is to better understand a nation. That is one of the many reasons why we are promoting the French language — to further better understanding among people of different nations.”