Franco-American Conference
Set For March In Lafayette

The Third Annual Franco-American Conference, sponsored by the State Department of Education in Louisiana, the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) and USL's National Bilingual Resource Center, will be held in Lafayette this spring. All interested persons are invited to attend this conference scheduled for March 28-31.

At a recent meeting, conference planners stated that their aims were not only the preservation of the French language but also the strengthening of their Franco-American heritage. They wish to create a sense of identity among Franco-Americans through an awareness of their heritage and culture. This annual conference is aimed at fostering the cooperation necessary for the fulfillment of these goals.

The first conference was held in Lafayette and the second in Providence, Rhode Island. The emphasis has been on New England and Louisiana, but this year the conference will be redefining 'Franco-American' to include other French-speaking areas of North America (Canada, Haiti, etc.) since these areas have significant cultural and historical ties with one another and, more importantly, all of these Franco-Americans live in regions where English has grown as it should while French has diminished through neglect and misunderstanding.

Resolutions have been proposed to establish a national Franco-American Confederation, a Confederation News Bulletin, a Youth Advocacy Council and a Committee for Franco-American Bilingual Education. These and other topics will be discussed at the 1980 conference.

There will be pre-conference activities in New Orleans and Houma scheduled for March 26-28. Visitors to Louisiana will have the opportunity to take a river cruise, tour the French Quarter, sample both Creole and Cajun food, visit bilingual classes and attend a mock carnival ball and a French Acadian mass. In addition to New Orleans, Houma and Lafayette, the Franco-Americans will be touring Marksville, St. Martinville and New Iberia. The conference will also have exhibits, a film festival, some music and possibly a play.

Conference planners are inviting diplomats from Belgium, France, Canada, Quebec, Switzerland and Haiti. Antoine Maillet, the Acadian writer who recently won France's Prix Goncourt for her novel about the Acadian odyssey, will again be invited to be one of the main speakers as she was at the first conference held in 1977 in Lafayette.

Those wishing more information should contact Rene Calais, National Bilingual Resource Center, P.O. Box 43410 USL, Lafayette, LA 70504. (Tel. 318 264-6991).

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