French-Minded CODOFIL Meets at Tulane

LOOKING over the latest issue of Acadtan Profile—a magazine for bilingual Louisiana—Wednesday night at the Tulane University Center are members of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL). From left, they are James F. Bezou, CODOFIL chairman James Domengeaux and Jean Le CanneUier, consul-general of France in New Orleans.

Value of State's Heritage Stressed by Louisianian

CODOFIL Chairman in Talk at Tulane

"We need everyone we can get to preserve Louisiana's extraordinary asset—our French heritage. And if we lose the language, we lose the heritage and culture . . . it's that simple." James Domengeaux, the chairman of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) was speaking to an audience that packed the Kendall Cram Room in the Tulane University Center Wednesday night.

The reason for the meeting? "It is absolutely necessary to develop grass root participation in the movement to preserve and expand the French language if this language is to blossom in Louisiana," Domengeaux said. "The only way to do this is to go directly to the people."

STATE AGENCY

Simply stated, the non-profit CODOFIL (a state agency created by the Legislature and endorsed by the governor) has as its purpose the development of Louisiana's French heritage, which is unique in the United States.

"Vive la difference! Louisianians Proudly Speak French!" read a ribbon displayed on a table of literature at the university center. Greetings at the door were in French; conversation flowed easily around the room in the Gallic tongue and CODOFIL member James F. Bezou read a rough, incomplete version of the organization's charter in French.

The charter is a summation of the purposes and goals of CODOFIL:

-To interest individuals as well as civic organizations in the movement.

-To encourage the use of the French language in the family.

-To encourage pride in the French culture and heritage.

RENAISSANCE SEEN

"French survives in Louisiana despite many adversities," Domengeaux said. "Radio, TV and so-called competent educators went out of their way to destroy our use of French. But the renaissance is occurring at full speed. This thing is moving! "But we need the cooperation of the people of New Orleans. This is not a useless effort. There are 1,500,000 people who speak and understand French in Louisiana, and in the northern part of the state, we find a great deal of enthusiasm for the program—people want the opportunity for their children to learn a second tongue."

"There had been a stigma on us in the past of the bayou country," Domengeaux said. "But terms such as boogalee or coonass cannot survive anymore. We're a proud, unique people—proud of our heritage. Legislation in 1961 that calls simply for at least five years of French in elementary schools and at least three years of French in high schools has helped, he said, and if that program is carried out throughout the state, the French language will firmly be established as a second tongue and Louisiana will become a center for French education in the United States."

GREAT RELUCTANCE

However, he said, there is a great reluctance in the individual school systems to disturb the status quo. "The French, Canadian and Quebec governments are all cooperating in this venture. It could mean literally millions and millions of dollars in tourism, trade, understanding and culture that this state has." The New Orleans chapter of CODOFIL will meet again Oct 31 at a site to be announced. The next state-wide CODOFIL meeting will be in Eunice Oct. 31.