French Said State Asset

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EUNICE — The teaching of French in Louisiana public schools must be given priority if the state's potential for bilingualism is not to be lost.

This was the assessment made by James Domengeaux, president of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, who spoke at a CODOFIL convention here yesterday. The meeting was attended by about 250 persons, including representatives from France and Canada.

Domengeaux described French as the state's greatest natural asset and Louisiana's efforts to promote bilingualism as the possible basis for similar programs in other states. Mississippi has already expressed interest in programs sponsored by CODOFIL, he stated.

Smother Interest

The CODOFIL president said that in the past teachers have been responsible for smothering interest in the French language because they were determined to put the melting pot idea into effect. They left us with a feeling of inferiority and a belief that it isn't fashionable to speak French.

This mentality is fast disappearing, Domengeaux said, and French is spoken almost everywhere in Louisiana today. Forty per cent of the state is French-speaking, he stated.

Written Language

According to Domengeaux, the French language can't be saved unless it is instilled in the grassroots of society. Also, it is necessary in a technological age that it be converted from an oral to a written language. Accomplishing this is the objective of CODOFIL, he said.

Domengeaux was critical of the practice of not introducing students to French until the ninth or 10th grade or until college. He described a study of USL students who were only exposed to the language for a few years in high school and college. The students were barely able to read French after they left school, he said.

French Study

"If French were taught in the (Continued on Page 2, Col. 4)"
AT CODOFIL MEET—Meeting in Eunice this weekend to discuss plans for the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana were Eunice Mayor Wilson J. Moosa, State Rep. Joseph Coreil of Evangeline Parish, CODOFIL Chairman James Domengeaux of Lafayette, and Rep. H.B. DeJean Jr. of St. Landry Parish. (Advertiser Staff Photo)
five years of elementary school and three years in high school, Louisiana could become a leader for the study of French in the United States," Bengeaux stated.

The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana has 2,500 members and is located in six parishes. Bengeaux stated that the organization is in the process of establishing charters in other states.

The convention program included several panel discussions, including one composed of six vette youths who spent a summer in Quebec as part of a CODOFIL-sponsored program.

Language Value

Joseph Glorioso, discussion generator, said that former CODOFIL President J. M. Codojil hoped to send about 300 youths to Canada and another 320 high school students to France. In his moments during the discussions, he emphasized the importance of getting the young people to see the value of a second language.

In a speech last night Mike Wexler, U.S. Senator from Alaska, outlined the difficulty of acting the young to the use of a second language. "The pressures for conformity work against such an undertaking," he said.

The Alaskan senator commended the effort made here to preserve a French culture to attempt being made in his state to maintain Eskimo, Inupiak, and Aleut languages."