Vive la différence! LOUISIANA IS DIFFERENT 
ici on parle français 
C'est pour le Développement du Français en Louisiane 
CODOFIL.

Billboards like this are being erected by the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana to promote the French language.

Louisiana French Are Regaining Pride In Heritage With Help of Agency

BY PAUL PORTNEY JR.

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LAFAYETTE — "Vive la différence! Louisiana is different. Ici on parle français." This quotation is beginning to appear on billboards throughout Louisiana as part of the campaign to encourage pride in the French heritage of the state.

The billboards are erected by the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL), a France state-supported agency established by the legislature to end generations of stifling the French culture of Louisiana.

Lifetime of Effort

CODOFIL's main goal is to promote a lifetime of effort on the part of those, said James Domengues of Lafayette.

Like most of the French-speaking peoples of South Louisiana, Domengues can neither read nor write the language. His generation is a casualty of the melting-pot philosophy that engulfed the United States after the Civil War.

The melting of French was discouraged by the schools of that period and people who spoke French in their homes were looked upon as ignorant and backward.

Agency Created

After years of effort by Domengues and others who thought the French heritage was an asset in Louisiana, the legislature created CODOFIL to preserve that heritage.

Acts were passed to require the teaching of French in the elementary schools except where parochial school boards asked for exemption.

All of these measures had the support of Gov. John McKeithen, who appointed Domengues chairman of CODOFIL.

Domengues believes that saving the language is the most important step toward saving the culture or "unless we save the language, all is lost," he tells audiences in the United States and Canada.

In the two years CODOFIL has existed, several gains have been made toward saving both the French language and the heritage.

Frida Returns

The melting-pot complex has been reversed and pride in being French has begun to return to South Louisiana.

The public schools have reversed their attitude and now encourage bilingual students.

Relations between Louisiana and French Canada have been improved on a permanent basis with the sending of a Quebec permanent representative to Lafayette.

Cities and towns in Acadia have paired with "Upper Cities" towns in Quebec and Nova Scotia.

Quebec is aiding in the development of radio and television programs in the French language.

The legislature has authorized an educational television station in French. The station will be called Televisite Louisiane.

Legal advertising in French has been approved by the legislature.

Place to Live

Domengues travels in the United States, Canada, France and other French-speaking countries extolling the virtues of South Louisiana as a place to live and work.

Canadian businessmen have begun investigating the investment opportunities in the area.

The movement has succeeded in attracting tourists and students in its drive to increase the tourist traffic in "Acadiana."

Scholarships for students from Canada and the French West Indies have been obtained from both government and private funds.

CODOFIL hopes to make the area the center of Latin-American trade with the United States as well as with the French-speaking world.

The establishment of the French-speaking trade mart in Lafayette is a step in that direction.

Domengues also pushes the idea of a bilingualism in a shrinking world. He believes the United States can become a bilingual country.

"Without the whole background and the might of the diverse elements in its population."

Other Groups

"The idea of CODOFIL is not restricted to Louisiana. It applies to the German, Spanish, Italian and other elements of the American melting pot. I believe the United States has the moral obligation to promote and preserve the cultural background of all elements of the population."

Domengues' greatest worry, since the legislature has approved the teaching of French in the elementary schools, is that teachers will not be trained fast enough to prevent further erosion of the French heritage.

This is why he feels that cooperation with France and Canada is important. These nations are willing to supply teachers and techniques to fill the gap of years of neglect in Louisiana.

The French Ministry of Education and the High Committee for the Detection and Expansion of the French Language will supply elementary teachers in Louisiana this fall.

Study Programs

These agencies will also provide study programs for 35 teachers from Louisiana in France next summer.

Canada will supply technical knowledge gained in the program to preserve the French heritage in Quebec.

Student exchange programs with France and Canada have been arranged. More than 50 students from Louisiana went to France this summer and more will go next year.

The exchange program will be expanded to include groups such as Kiwanian clubs.

Revised brochure for Louisiana and French Heritage in Louisiana will be mailed in time to be in sight and the French heritage of Louisiana will not be lost. "Vive la différence."