Nicholls Dean Describes State French Movement

QUEBEC CITY — The dean of administration of Nicholls University at Thibodaux, in oil-rich Louisiana Dr. Elmo Authement, told Le Conseil de la Vie Francaise (Council on French Life) in suburban Courville over the weekend that Louisiana has taken the means to become a bilingual State within 20 years through a state agency called the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, better known as CODOFIL. Le Conseil de la Vie Francaise groups representatives from most segments of the French-speaking community of the Americas.

"A native language that was still spoken or understood by over a million people was on its deathbed but is springing back to life around the identity of CODOFIL," Authement said. "That is why CODOFIL, being imitated by other States now, has to keep a distinct identity for it has become a symbol of resurgence of pride in knowing the French language and a rallying point for those in the State who want to learn it."

Loss of Language

The loss of CODOFIL identity would mean the loss of the French language in Louisiana at this time, he said.

While in Quebec City, Authement said he would meet with representatives of the Intergovernmental Affairs of the Quebec Government to discuss his university's possible participation in Quebec's massive program of development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and in the James Bay area of the Hudson Bay. Nicholls University is carrying out intensive studies in off-shore endeavors including environmental questions in general and specific projects for LOOP (Louisiana Offshore Oil Port Inc.), a group of ten major oil companies which are planning to build independently a superport off the Louisiana coast. Quebec has already been chosen as the site of a superport north of the U.S. border.

Regular Courses

Authement said some 40,000 pupils in the elementary grades are taking regular French courses in various programs at present and in every part of the State, as compared with a handful four years ago when CODOFIL was formed. If planned programs continued, within financial sources and budgets, "Authement said.

He said CODOFIL's influence is penetrating all fields of human activity such as radio and television where some 100 total hours a week of French are broadcast by a half-dozen stations as compared to some ten hours by a couple of stations four years ago, music were the Cajun sound now is spreading throughout the land and tourism were the regeneration of the French language is attracting visitors and business from all over the French-speaking world.

First to Recognize

Authement told Le Conseil de la Vie Francaise that the State of Quebec was the first to recognize the value of CODOFIL and the first to support by practical programs that fledgling State Agency after it was created by unanimous vote of the 1968 Legislature which was two-thirds English-speaking.

"Without that early recognition and practical support from the State of Quebec, it may well be that CODOFIL would not have survived at the outset and that the advantage of a second tongue in today's highly competitive world and the richness of the French language would have been lost forever to the State of Louisiana," said Authement who also is president of the LaFouche Chapter of CODOFIL, one of 15 grass-roots parish (county) chapters in the 64-parish State.

Dr. Elmo Authement