In Louisiana

Our linguistic integrity is at stake

BY GLENN TUCKER

This opposition must be met. A public hearing was held in Baton Rouge on Dec. 8 in order to discuss the revision of many of Louisiana's foreign language regulations, which concern the status of foreign languages. A required status for languages was tentatively accepted on both the elementary and secondary levels, yet there was strong and powerful opposition to this measure, opposition which could eventually block the actual implementation of it.

THE DOCUMENT BEING revised is Bulletin 714, "Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators," which is scheduled to receive its definitive amendments this month.

Unless this handbook is changed in favor of a required status of foreign language instruction, all the progress the French movement has seen over the last few years could prove to have been a waste of time. Concerned citizens must act immediately.

Opponents to foreign language requirements may acknowledge that increased foreign language competency would be desirable, ideally, given the increased international interdependence of the world, the danger of nuclear war, the increased need for deeper cultural understanding, etc. Although pages of arguments in favor of foreign language requirements exist, perhaps the best witness to the sensibility of such measures is a look at language requirements in public schools the world over.

Yet these persons feel such requirements, which fall in the area of "language arts," would take away from class time focused on the urgent problem of students' deficiency in English.

BILINGUAL STUDENTS have shown increased capability in all disciplines. But, as concerns English, foreign language study is essential, as it is difficult to understand the intricacies of one's mother tongue without some knowledge of a second language, for the sake of comparison.

Here, too, is a special complementary role to play in the study of English, since, after the Norman conquest of 1066, the two languages became inexorably intertwined.

LOUISIANA: not required

During an entire morning of contacting foreign embassies, we found not a single country without foreign language requirements in its schools.

Louisiana, in view of its unique linguistic resources, should lead our nation into language competency, changing the current imbalance.

WHETHER OR NOT changes actually occur will depend on you. If you favor foreign language requirements in Louisiana public schools, you should express your opinion immediately.

Contact: State Board of Education P.O. Box 44064
Baton Rouge, LA 70804
Telephone (504) 362-5840

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