The New Louisiana Story

REMARKS
OF
HON. F. EDWARD HÉBERT
OF LOUISIANA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Tuesday, March 5, 1974

Mr. HÉBERT. Mr. Speaker, on February 15, 1974, the Louisiana congressional delegation and the Louisiana Society of Washington bestowed upon James Domengeaux, chairman of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana—CODOFIL—a plaque which reads:

For enlightening the Nation to the vital necessities of language pluralism in an increasingly demanding world.

For awakening the State to its linguistic resources and a People to its heritage.

Who is this man Domengeaux and why did he receive this plaque?

I believe the life of Jimmie Domengeaux, with whom I entered Congress in 1941, can best be described in the following way: he is a champion of lost causes that are no longer lost after he has taken them over.

His professional life as a lawyer corresponds to this description: murder cases that looked hopeless were turned over to him; the helpless small landowner manipulated by the big corporations came to see him. There is still today a standing rule in his Lafayette law office that anybody in the grips of loan sharks or finance companies shall be defended free of charge. The underdog continues to flock to his law office, as well as the kind of clients that make his firm one of the most prestigious in the South.

His political life corresponds to the above description. Domengeaux has always been aloof from rigid coalitions and, a lone wolf, has at times, with a handful of associates, succeeded in demolishing these coalitions when the philosophies they lived by seemed to him to be detrimental.

* His personal life reflects the description above. Domengeaux has, to this day, a realm of powerful friends, loyal and dedicated to his person. He has, also, a few powerful enemies.

When former Gov. Sam Houston Jones described him at a huge public gathering in St. Martinville in October 1968, designed as the kickoff for the campaign to save the French language in Louisiana, he said:

He is a man who loves people, but who also loves a fight for the eternal verities, and immutable principles that have been the mark of true civilization since the greatness of man has evolved from the caves and mud huts of antiquity—Had this man lived in the days of the Crusades, he would have been leading the battalions and divisions and phalanxes of greatness—and now this restless soul of a great man strikes out on another great crusade; that of the preservation of the culture and language of a great people.

Human motivation is never one but multiple. It is therefore not simple to ascertain what really started Jimmie Domengeaux on saving the French language in Louisiana. Closest to the truth, I would say, would be a combination of the aspects described above, a convergence of altruism, love of a good fight, and love of his fellow man. Add to this a capacity to see the forest as well as every tree in it and an instinct that has served him well in most activities he has taken up and you will have an inkling of the way the mind of this man works and what brought him, one day in 1967, to embark upon a project that most saw as impossible.

On that day, he had a vision of what the United States could be in a world whose political, psychological, and sociological coordinates were changing radically. He saw this great Nation, a world leader isolated in the world, not only retain the strength of the position it has but augment that strength in the new order of things. He saw the different intangibles coming into play, the future alliances built no longer on pure economics alone but equally on the more ethereal aspects of culture, humanism, and heritage. He saw that the United States had at home the potential material to play a leading role in this new world because it has at home the heritages of all the world built into the mosaic of its national identity. He felt that there are practically no languages foreign in the United States, that most are native, rooted as they are in the thousand and one different groups that make up this Nation.

He wrote of these thoughts, later, in the January 1970 issue of the Acadiana Profile:

The day can be seen, no longer around the corner, when this Country will have to deal with the rest of the world not primarily from the position of strength it has and will still have—The United States will deal with the rest of the human race through the ability to understand other peoples, through the capacity to grasp other cultures. And this can only be done, not by eliminating the strength it has and by all means should keep, but by adding the essential humanistic element of the intimate knowledge of languages.

He knew that this country's national identity had been cemented together by the melting pot philosophy, by the need for the whole Nation to speak a common language in order to assure unity and stability to a country that could have resembled the Tower of Babel if the proliferating tongues had been allowed to go unchecked. For a multitude of different languages made up the basic fabric of the national cloth. He also knew that the time had come for the United States to abandon the melting pot attitude, never officially declared but nevertheless vividly applied.

He wrote in that same issue of Acadiana Profile:

Today, because of unilingualism, the United States, this leader of Nations, is inexorably turning upon itself and crawling into its own shell.

Through lack of communications on a deeper human level, this very influential part of the world, with a presence in every part...
of the world, is becoming isolated in all parts of the world. It is ironical, and tragic, that the country which ushered in the new era of communications (through its advanced electronics technology) finds it extremely hard to communicate—Language is communication, or rather, the means of communication.

Domengeaux hesitated a little before declaring that the melting pot philosophy had served its time. He knew that attacking sacred cows is not a popular thing to do. But he also knew that this particular sacred cow, the melting pot attitude, which had served the Nation so well in the past, was on the way to doing irreparable harm to this country in this world of rapidly shrinking dimension, of instant communication and rapprochement between peoples and nations.

He recognized the death of the melting pot philosophy in this country and acknowledged the new age of language pluralism, the roots of which he saw already imbedded in U.S. soil through the Nation's origins and multiple heritages. As he said, later, in that issue of Acadiana Profile:

I see, in the very near future, the day when the United States will be a bilingual country. It will be bilingual for German in areas where that language prevailed. It will be bilingual with Italian in places where that language developed. It will be bilingual with Spanish in regions where this language was used. It will be bilingual with French where French blossomed.

As was the case in all of Domengeaux' endeavors, only a handful of close friends heeded his words at first. Then, through persuasion, goading, and rebuilding of pride, the idea spread. And by the time this year he received his plaque, the legislature had created the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana—CODOFIL—the Quebec Government had opened and manned an office in Lafayette, the French Government had given massive assistance, the Canadian Government was convinced of the worthiness of the cause, overtures had been made to, or by, a number of other important governments, including Belgium, 40,000 pupils were taking French in the elementary grades, and the French language was being heard once again on the streets of bayou towns and villages from where it had disappeared. And other States of the Union were watching this movement in Louisiana which authoritative people, including, and especially, education officials, had said was impossible and was now embracing all fields of human endeavor including, and especially, education.

In other words, in less than 7 years, Domengeaux and those who believed in him brought a language from the brink of extinction to the verge of existence.

We, in Washington, have been watching with keen interest the Louisianan experiment. I said, myself, after the Second World War:

America, as well as every other country of the world, depends on contact with the others for its very livelihood. How, then, can we isolate ourselves between our two oceans and pretend the rest of the world does not exist. We cannot.

I do not think I will be breaking the National Security Act if I say that, as chairman of the House Armed Forces Committee, I am in a position to know of the dire need of languages development in the United States insofar as one sector is concerned, that of national defense. In 1959, the National Defense Education Act was established to try to promote the studying of languages by those so qualified at the college level. NDEA institutes were set up throughout the Nation in an effort to alleviate the great inadequacy of our Nation in the extremely important field of international communications.

May I be so candid as to say that this approach has failed. Language curricula are weakening throughout the Nation's universities and colleges and language requirements are being dropped outright in most.

We, of Washington, view this as extremely serious for the security of the Nation, not to mention the other areas of our national endeavor such as economics and culture. The seriousness of our lack in languages development is brought home to us every day in one way or another, in opportunities missed through misunderstandings that could have been avoided, in the need to resort continually to interpreters, often foreign or foreign-trained, in every move we make on the international plane. It has been said by scholars that one delaying factor in the signing of a final peace agreement in Vietnam was the hindrance caused by the unresponsiveness of the interpretation of the peace agreement as written by the other side. A first and main reason of this unresponsiveness in interpreting the other fellow's thought resides in the fact that "you cannot put yourself in the other fellow's skin unless you know that fellow's language intimately," as Jimmie Domengeaux ably puts it.

The example alone of the Communist overthrow of the Chilean Government should in itself spur the United States to embark upon a massive program of languages development. Not as temporary remedy for this or that ailment, as most Federal language programs have been devised, but for the sake of languages themselves and the good of the Nation through their mastery, as put forth by Domengeaux and leading educational authorities at a luncheon chaired by freshman Congressman John Breaux here, July 11, 1973, attended in person by a score of U.S. Senators and Representatives from Louisiana, New England, and other States, including, besides the Louisiana congressional delegation, Senators Muskie, Kennedy, Pell, Gravel, McIntyre, Stafford, and Representatives Sarasin, Wyman, Kyrillos, Studds, Mallary, Deinam, Cromin, and at which I introduced personally my good friend the CODOFIL chairman. The Chilean Government was overthrown without one shot being fired because the Soviet Union had perfected some 20,000 technicians in Chile's national language. These technicians, completely fluent in the language, mingled in every strata of Chilean society and were thus able to influence, primarily through language, every level of that society.

It is ironic that school boards throughout this country have spent millions of dollars to destroy ethnic languages in children who were born speaking them, while at the same time they were spending added millions to teach the same languages in high school and college to children who knew none at all and were already too old to learn them easily, said at that luncheon Dr. Marron Fort, Director of the French North American Program at the University of New Hampshire and Vice-Chairman of the Council for the Development of French in New England (CODOFINE), a recently formed organization patterned along the lines of CODOFIL. For years educators and government officials have complained about the lack of bilingual individuals who might do America's business abroad while right in our midst were millions of individuals who spoke French, Spanish, German, Polish and a dozen other languages.

At that luncheon also, Dr. Cecil Taylor, chancellor of Louisiana State University, said:

A source of strength for this Nation lies in big, multiple language proficiencies—and cultural diversity.

I am not being too strong in qualifying as dismal this Nation's failure in that basic art of communication, the art of languages.

Where this Nation failed, however, Louisiana is succeeding. That Southern State is bringing back to life a language that was practically dead. How are they doing it?
Like every good politician, Domengeaux knew that you cannot bring anything about unless the people want it. The people of Louisiana were indifferent at best. The Anglo-Saxon element of the population was barely aware of the existence of a French-language phenomenon, because, truly, the French language had become a nonphenomenon. In the other elements of Louisiana society, the French language had been swept under the rug. The Cajun and Creole parents spoke only English to their children. That was the case also in the Negro family, although the blacks spoke French to a greater degree than did the whites. Everywhere the language was identified with poverty and ignorance.

The melting pot attitude was not by any means a deliberate attempt by the English-speaking to wipe out the other languages. It came from the different ethnic groups themselves who believed they saw in this philosophy a better chance for their offspring to make it in an environment they perceived as dominated by the English language. They spoke exclusively English to their children. This practice spread to the schools. The Cajun kids were punished for speaking French on the school grounds not by the English but by the Cajun teachers themselves.

In this atmosphere, after a number of generations the mother tongues in the United States other than English became something to shun, to be ashamed of. My own mother, a French teacher in New Orleans, spoke French fluently. I cannot speak a word of it. My parents spoke French in the home only to each other and when they wanted to keep something secret from the children.

This practice was widespread in Louisiana.

Jimmie understood this and understood it well. He embarked on a psychological campaign to give worth to bilingualism in the eyes of the people.

When he undertook this campaign, people who spoke the French language were looked upon as ignorant and backward by the other members of their own ethnic group. Today, it has become fashionable to speak French in Louisiana and the language can be heard again on the streets of the bayou towns and villages. People have become proud of their heritage and language. Civic clubs throughout southwest Louisiana have started conducting their meetings and procedures in French. And bilingual street signs and historical markers are cropping up in many localities in "Acadiana," the name given to the southwest Louisiana region since the awakening of the State to its linguistic resources and of a people to the value of its traditions.

This metamorphosis of Acadiana was accomplished by an unrelenting barrage of written and verbal incentives to speak French in the home, to teach French to the children in the early grades, to be aware that bilingualism is an asset and not a liability. This "psychological battle" as Jimmie puts it, was done first through several hundred billboards planted along the main highways, then through thousands of attractive handysize posters placed in public view in the banks, stores, churches, and in the homes of the increasing number of Louisianians who recognized the value of the fledgling CODOPIL movement. It was done through the commercial advertisers who added a little slogan at the end of their advertisement on radio and TV, first by a few of Domengeaux's friends through their personal sympathy for him and then by dozens of other businessmen who saw a captive market for their products if the movement took momentum. It was done, also, through an unending series of speaking engagements which brought Domengeaux to the four corners of his State and to international conferences and meetings abroad.

Although not intended as such, this campaign caught the fancy of the local, national, and international press. Over a 1-year period, some 50 top foreign newsmen featured the French-language renaissance in Louisiana: Connaissance des Voyages, ranked among the leading travel periodicals in the world, with a 24-page color spread and cover; Toronto Star, the biggest English language daily in Canada; Le Monde, the Paris intellectual daily; Le Devoir, the Montreal intellectual daily; Jours de France, the big Paris slick magazine, with an 8-page color spread; Radio-Canada with a coast-to-coast television musical pictorial using Louisiana French-language talent; both black and white; Agence France-Presse, the French wire service serving 136 countries; Le Figaro, the second-biggest French daily in the world; La Presse, the biggest French-language daily in the Western Hemisphere; Montreal Star, the second-biggest English-language daily in Canada; L'Express, the "Time Magazine" of the French world; TV Hebdo, France-Canada's "TV Guide," with a five-part series; Syntheses, an in-depth topic analysis magazine; the Belgian daily, Le Soir, among the biggest in Europe, with two front-page features—were among those talking about Louisiana and of the first signs of success in its attempts to revive a dying tongue.

The Philadelphia Enquirer said about CODOPIL in June 1970: A special phenomenon is sweeping the bayou country of southwest Louisiana. A million and a half Cajuns are learning not to be ashamed. These generous, intelligent and moral people are emerging from generations of self-hatred, awakening to a sense of their heritage and rediscovering their folklore.

The Los Angeles Times, Life magazine, the Baltimore Sun and the New York Times have featured articles and editorials in a similar vein as well as a dozen other U.S. papers and most of Louisiana's 32 dailies. The Economist of London, England, just put out a write-up on Louisiana with a special section on CODOPIL. And the Reader's Digest, for its French and English international editions, Paris-Match, the highest circulation newsphoto weekly in the French world, and the Wall Street Journal are preparing articles for early publication on the renaissance of the French language.

This unsolicited, invaluable publicity will continue unabated as a result of the convention held in Lafayette this March of the International Association of French-Speaking Journalists and French-Speaking Press, attended by some 150 newsmen, reporters, and wives from 20 French-speaking regions of the world. The convention is a sort of follow-up to the International Congress of the French-speaking Americas held in Lafayette in April 1972 under the auspices of CODOPIL and attended by 22 French powers, at which incoming Governor Edwin Edwards, fresh from taking his oath of office in both French and English, made a half-hour speech, off-the-cuff, and all in French, in which he said:

If it concerns the French language in Louisiana, you will not have to stand in line in my office, you will not have to cool your heels at my door, I will do everything I can to help the language live and prosper.

Incidently, this publicity, obtained quite by accident and which could not have been bought for any price, is causing a tourist boom in Louisiana. According to the Louisiana Tourist Development Commission, the flow of tourists from across the Canadian border has increased by 30 percent. It can be assumed that the majority of these tourists are Quebecers, known to move around a lot. The U.S. deficit in international tourism being 2.9 billions, this tourist aspect should in itself be sufficient to cause the U.S. Government and the different States
to implement serious programs of second languages.

Domeneaux knew, meanwhile, that speeches, posters, slogans, and incidental tourism were not enough to catch the young, whose generation, although still understanding French to a large extent in the Acadia region, had abandoned the use of the language for all practical purposes as being something of another age, and in whose eyes the movement might be construed as part of an establishment trick to channel the proverbial restlessness of youth into determined streams. Without the participation of the young, the language is truly dead. So Domeneaux started sending Louisiana's teenagers where they dance, play, work, laugh, study, quarrel in the language; in the State of Quebec first, then in France and other French-speaking areas of the world.

They were a handful at first. But now they leave Louisiana by the hundreds every summer and come back in the fall speaking French. Some 60 French clubs in Louisiana's high schools recently formed a CODOJEUNE, intended to be a youth wing of CODOFIL for the early teens.

From a stigma of inferiority which it was a couple of years ago, the language has become an in-thing among the young of Louisiana. It is a swinging language as, under Domeneaux' personal encouragement and incentive, they are showing this month with their Tribute to Cajun Music, a presentation of traditional and contemporary French Louisiana music put on in the Municipal Auditorium of Lafayette in conjunction with CODOFIL and the Performing Arts Division of our own Smithsonian Institution.

Foremost on Domeneaux' mind all this time, and a subject of daily preoccupation from the start, was the fact that the language was not taught in the schools. He saw as I saw, the failure of the present system of foreign languages teaching in the United States, by which hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year to start a second language in college or high school to produce a postgraduate unilingual person. He called this a "criminal waste of time, money and talent" and, before the American Association of Teachers of French in New Orleans in December 1970, advocated the outright abandonment of foreign languages in the United States unless they are taught right, unless what Bruce Garard, former chief of the U.S. Office of Education's modern language section, called "an absurdity which passeth understanding" is corrected.

Domeneaux knew, and this has been demonstrated to us hundreds of times here in Washington in our international dealings, that you cannot fully understand the other fellow unless you can put yourself in that man's skin. And you cannot put yourself in that man's skin unless you know his language intimately. And to know a language intimately, you have to start that language when you are a child: in the elementary grades and better still, in kindergarten. High school is simply too late. The more so for college and university.

A second language started in high school or college is but a coat of veneer camouflaging a basic incapacity to communicate adequately in that language. One does not feel the language and one does not feel the breadth and scope of meaning conveyed by the other person.

Dr. Fort said at that Washington luncheon:

We have only begun to communicate with others when we can talk with their tongues, listen with their ears, see with their eyes through their own language.

Because certified teachers of French did not exist in Louisiana for the elementary grades, CODOFIL—by now Domeneaux had met privately with President Pompidou, Prime Minister Trudeau, Prime Minister Bourassa and the ministers and high civil servants of those three governments—started importing young teaching assistants from France through an arrangement resembling that of the U.S. Peace Corps by which French draftees can serve their 2-year compulsory military service teaching in foreign countries. The first handful that arrived in the fall of 1970 has been augmented to several hundreds, including a contingent of young teacher trainees from Quebec following a personal visit to Prime Minister Bourassa by Governor Edwards, who upon his return, at an unveiling of bilingual historical markers in the city of New Iberia, said:

The French language is not just a tool used to draw trade or tourism. We have tangible evidence enough through our economic benefits—The language is also a continuing expression of age-old loyalties and a proud heritage.

This program of imported teaching personnel will last only during such time as needed for Louisiana universities to produce a sufficient number of native certifed elementary teachers. Six Louisiana universities have implemented elementary French teacher training programs up to now and at present certify a couple hundred native teachers a year total. It will take several years before the elementary French teaching staff will be completely homegrown, however. The process is being speeded up through special courses followed by several hundred Louisiana teachers in France and Quebec each summer and a hundred teachers and school administrators on year-long study in France. Louisiana has also waived out-of-State tuition fees for studying teaching personnel from abroad and placed French as part of language arts, no longer looking upon it as just an enrichment subject.

CODOFIL's French school programs are supervised by the State Department of Education and by the CODOFIL Academic Advisory Board comprising, by Governor appointment, the heads of the foreign languages of all Louisiana colleges and universities and set up to counsel CODOFIL on all matters academic. The Board also publishes for CODOFIL, twice a year, the Revue de Louisiane—Louisiana Review, a bilingual academic magazine subscribed to by the majority of important universities of the world and by the intelligentsia of most big cities. A similar advisory body has been constituted to concentrate entirely on the kindergarten level.

Six years ago, there were no pupils taking French in the elementary public schools of Louisiana and very few in the private and parochial schools. Today, there are over 40,000. Some 7,000 are added each year, forming "a deep and vast reservoir of bilingual individuals for the high-school and university levels and beyond to all spheres of adult life," as Dr. Elmo Authement, dean of administration of Nicholls University, Thibodaux, described it to the Conseil de la Vie Francoise en Amerique meeting in Quebec City in August 1973.

An independent evaluation report on a pilot group of CODOFIL elementary pupils made for the State Department of Education by Ghinà and Associates, New Orleans, says:

Summatively, it can be stated that the Pilot French Program is a very sizable, educational project with vast socioeconomic implications. Its educational worth is undeniable; its impact on the educational community remarkable. The program has fueled the enthusiasm of Louisiana parents toward their offsprings' learning of French, and rekindled their own smouldering pride in their Franco-American ancestry. Further, it affords an opportunity to pass on to their progeny the cultural heritage which is unique to Louisiana.

Even if a given language has disappeared from a given area, the people of that area still have the ethnic personality fashioned by, or expressed by, that language in their ancestors, a situation
This bilingual column serves as a textbook for the thousand adults taking night classes given across the State by the CODOFL teaching personnel from abroad and serves as a link between the 15 CODOFL Parish chapters and their present 30,000 members pending the early organizing of the whole State's 64 parishes-counties—and the creating of a chapter liaison bulletin.

The column also serves as an information vehicle for the different organizations and associations created under the aegis of CODOFL such as the International Municipal and Bilingual Committee grouping Louisiana's mayors and municipalities for exchanges within the framework of twinnings between cities in the State and in the rest of the French-speaking world, the Louisiana section of the International Association of French-speaking parliamentarians grouping the French-speaking legislators of the world, the Louisiana part of the International Association of French-speaking Medical Doctors, and others.

What were the Anglo-Saxons, and the other groups of English-language descendants doing all this time? With two-thirds of the membership in the legislature they participated fully in the unanimous vote that in May 1968 created CODOFL "empowered to do any and all things necessary to accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found in the State of Louisiana for the cultural, economic, and tourist benefit of the State."

They also participated fully in the unanimous accompanying vote allowing "the French language and history of French populations in Louisiana and elsewhere in the Americas" to be taught in the first 5 years in the public elementary and 3 years in the high school systems of the State "as expeditiously as possible but not later than the beginning of the 1972-73 school year—except that any parish or city school board, upon request to the State board of education, shall be excluded from this requirement, and such request shall not be denied."

They also fully participated in the unanimous vote, taken at that same time, stipulating that—

Educational television operated under the auspices of any public institution in the State of Louisiana be bilingual in character paying due regard to the proportion of French-speaking listeners within the broadcast area of such operations.

They fully supported the unanimous adoption of other accompanying acts allowing Louisiana educational institutions to offer teacher certification programs in elementary school French, permitting legal notices and public documents to be published in French supplementary to the required English publication and authorizing the establishment of a nonprofit French Language Television Broadcasting Corp.

They organized from A to Z the first big CODOFL convention at Natchitoches, in completely Anglo-Saxon territory, in December 1969; they readily accepted the teaching personnel from abroad—one completely Anglo-Saxon parish, Ouachita, requested and got 15 French teachers; they make up one-third of the groups that study abroad each year; and, this year, they fully supported the near-unanimous inclusion of an article in the proposed new State constitution recognizing the right to preserve and foster the linguistic origin of Louisianians.

One newspaper, the Shreveport Times, in a completely Anglo-Saxon area, said in a January 1971 article on CODOFL:

Historically Louisiana has been a State sharply divided between the Anglo-Saxon North and the predominantly Cajun French-speaking South. Now, through the introduction of French to the Union Parish classes, a step may have been taken toward bridging the gap that has so long separated these two areas.

The newspaper further quoted the Anglo-Saxon school principal as saying:

This has been a truly remarkable program, we certainly are well pleased with the success of the program. The children are so responsive that they have picked up the language faster than the other teachers... It is a dream come true to get French into the elementary grades.

The Bastrop Daily Enterprise, also serving a completely Anglo-Saxon area, said in a September 1973 editorial on CODOFL:

Yes, we are making progress here in Louisiana in second language learning, far above anything I have seen in any other State. I am proud that our school board and superintendent, with the cooperation of parents and students are participating so well. I hope one of these days that Anglo-Saxon North Louisiana will be as French-speaking as South Louisiana.

To quote that Ghini and Associates evaluation report again:

When asked if they (the parents) liked the idea of having their child learn French, 97% of parents answered "Yes," and even more impressively, the respondents from the Northern Parishes who supposedly have less French ancestry than those of the other two areas, were 100% in favor of their children learning French.
The Anglo-Saxon people, and the others of English language descent, see the tremendous benefits to their children and grandchildren of what Jimmie Domengeaux is saying to the State and Nation. They see the value of bilingualism for their descendants in a world where everybody is a neighbor. Especially, they see the economic side of bilingualism and the advantages in this field for those who possess it. They know that the multinational corporations is where it's at in today's, and tomorrow's, world. American-owned for the most part, the need of the multinationals in American personnel who speak more than one language is increasing in leaps and bounds. The French language effectively taught in Louisiana's schools is career education in its true meaning and the Anglo-Saxon parents know this.

What were the Negroes doing? That Ouachita Parish which requested and got 15 French teachers has a black supervisor active in that program. One-third of their population speaking French natively to a still greater degree than the Whites, the Louisiana Negroes see the progress of bilingualism in their midst as giving them an edge over the unilingual white man in business, culture, and education both at home, where they see a second language giving to their children a greater scope of being and the prestige of added culture, and abroad, where they see how the forces in today's world are being realigned into patterns definable not to strict economics alone. They know that the black man will have much greater difficulty getting things done in the emerging nations than will the bilingual black man because the majority of these are black and French-speaking. They realize that much matters of importance to the Nation with the emerging countries will be managed by bilingual American blacks.

Domengeaux said at that Washington luncheon:

The French-speaking black American will be a bridge between the United States and the emerging countries.

For the other elements of Louisiana society, the Cajuns and the dozen other groups linked historically to the French language in Louisiana, the current renaissance is giving back to a people its soul. It is uncovering an identity which had been buried in self-deprecation and shame.

As for the young, of all ethnic and racial origins, in their perennial value seeking, they see with Jimmie Domengeaux and CODIFIL the potential of the French language in Louisiana not only in relation to the Nation and international affairs as such but also in providing their home towns and home State.

They see that the development of a truly bilingual Louisiana, based on the existence of a strong indigenous French-speaking community in Acadiana, will be the impetus to a social and economic development far surpassing the already tremendous contributions of tourism. They realize that the longrun economic development of a region does not depend primarily on its natural resources but rather on its human resources.

The ability of a region to create and attract high growth and high-technology industries depends largely on the skills and the innovative spirit of its population and on its institutional infrastructure. It cannot be stressed enough that an economy based on natural resources is necessarily an unstable one on the long run for the nature of natural resources is constantly changing with technological progress.

Domengeaux has repeated time and again that Louisiana's vast oil resources will be depleted one day, in a relatively short time as counted by the calendar of history, and that the key to longrun economic and social development is an economic structure based on the acquired skills of the population and on the specialized and sophisticated services offered by the institutions of the region.

CODIFIL knows that the basic question in regional economic development today is how to create a climate which will keep the dynamic, the innovators, the potential entrepreneurs and the young in the region; or even attract them from other regions.

Looking at the truly unique cultural heritage which Louisiana possesses it seems to Domengeaux and to the young Louisianians who support his movement that Louisiana should be a tremendously exciting and stimulating place to live and work, a stage which should attract the young from all over the Nation. They see that this heritage may indeed be Louisiana's last chance to create an innovative social milieu which would make it unique in America.

Although the creation of a truly bilingual Louisiana will be a long and difficult task, they see that the growth of an educated French community in the State will inevitably give rise to a multitude of institutions which will make their State a major cultural center in America. They see what will happen when Louisiana will possess the only truly bilingual French-English university in the United States. Equally, the serious development of French and bilingual mass media, TV, radio, newspapers, and so forth, will imply new standards in Louisiana journalism and cultural production. In short, it will most certainly furnish the necessary impetus for the establishment of a Louisiana-based "intelligence," comparable to those existing in Boston, San Francisco, or Montreal. For much of the university educated elite of America Louisiana will not just be a nice place to visit but also to live.

The day Louisiana becomes a rallying point for the educated, research-based industries and company head offices will not be far behind. Companies are increasingly interested in locating their head offices and research facilities in areas where their skilled personnel and executives like to live and where they can easily attract such personnel. The role of cultural amenities is increasing constantly as a major factor in attracting modern industries.

The young see that the existence of a French-language identity will not only facilitate commercial links hitherto neglected in other areas of the world but will equally help to attract investments to Louisiana from such countries as France, Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland, not to mention immigration. The Montreal or Brussels businessman will certainly feel more inclined to invest in an environment where French is also spoken. Also, French-speaking students from across the world will come and study in Louisiana. For much of the rest of the world, whether they be students, businessmen, or artists, Louisiana will be the first place they will look to for American know-how, so important in this modern world built on technology.

This has already started to happen, although the French language movement in Louisiana is still in its infancy. In 1971, the big Province of Quebec, one-third the size of the continental United States, wanted to go to Texas for its know-how, manpower, and equipment and its offshore development in the vast Gulf of St. Lawrence region where a fabulous strike has been made off Sable Island. The French language, embodied as a movement through the fledgling CODIFIL, tipped the scale in favor of Louisiana. And the director of the Quebec office in Lafayette, established when that Government saw in 1969 that Louisiana was serious in its efforts to regenerate the French language, tells me that a number of important firms from Montreal are showing a definite interest in inaugurating business on the Gulf of
Mexico, with Louisiana as their local base of operation.

The young see with CODOFIL, that the creation of such a unique French-English community, with all the institutions that this implies, will permit Louisianna to export cultural goods across America and to play the dominant role in certain fields which it should have America and is already becoming “in” in Paris, Montreal, and Brussels. What a splendid way is already becoming a “product” in Paris, Montreal, and Brussels. What a splendid way to make Louisiana known around the world.

The young look to the future. They see that CODOFIL is not an attempt to turn back the clock; they see that the leaders of the French language movement are not looking in the rearview mirror.

The young talk of the need for a better America, of the need for new alternatives. There is talk of the need to develop a “counter culture.” Every summer one can observe young Americans going to Europe in droves: in search of what? Some go in for Zen. Others become Jesus freaks. Some emigrate. Many of these reactions, if not most, are negative and must only be temporary solutions. The construction of a true living cultural alternative within America will be a most positive and creative way of responding to the needs and aspirations of much of Louisiana’s and America’s young. The Louisiana French culture will be a uniquely American alternative.

A bilingual Louisiana is a project which is striking the imagination of the young. Because it is not presented as the conservation of an old rural culture but rather as a new, modern and progressive alternative. And because the chairman of CODOFIL founded his movement devoid of all nationalistic, religious or racial significations.

He wrote in that issue of Acadiana Profile:

*I would be the first to sabotage the Council and fight the French language if I thought the movement was a nationalistic one.*

I have said that Domengeaux and CODOFIL have brought a second language from a state of near-extinction to one of near-existence in Louisiana. The truth is that the French language will certainly disappear from the scene in one generation as will other second languages in the United States if the following measures are not taken immediately or in the very near future:

Second languages must be put on a priority footing in Individual States and in the Federal Government of the United States. They must no longer be treated as stepchildren, or as “illegitimate children” as Domengeaux puts it.

The major part of Louisiana’s French language movement is financed through cost-sharing arrangements with foreign governments. The State cannot continue forever to expect foreign countries to educate its children. This Nation, since so independent-minded and strong, seems to have developed a dependency syndrome lately. The energy question is an example in point.

Let the foreign aid from the French-speaking nations to this country stop, and that will be the end of the French language in Louisiana despite the gigantic task accomplished by CODOFIL in the last 7 years. That unbelievably rich natural asset will be lost forever to the State and Nation unless its development will already have been put on the priority list of the local school boards throughout the State and backed by adequate local funding.

I said there are several hundred foreign teachers of French in the State. It is several thousand that is needed at the elementary level. Right now, before the native language is eroded among the population irretrievably. I mentioned that the legislature allowed the establishment of a nonprofit French language television station. The capacitating act has no power, however, since no funds were ever committed to set up this TV station.

Be assured that the foreign countries will pull out one day, due to changing politics and priorities at home and the other unforeseeable reasons why nations go one way or another. Louisiana must educate its own children.

On the national level, the puerile titles this and titles that in second languages must be abandoned for a mature thought-out progressive and forceful policy toward the development of languages across the Nation for the sake of those languages themselves and the good they will do to this Nation and not in view of underprivileged children or as a palliative for the predicament of immigrants with faulty English.

Every American child should have the opportunity to learn intimately a second language from kindergarten to university on a basis equal to that of arithmetic or the other priority school subjects. This is as basic to the security and progress of this Nation as are guns, economics, and the arts. My God, immigrant children have more rights in this country than citizen children.

If this is not done, then the teaching of foreign languages should be abandoned in the United States for they are a “fraud on the American public,” as Domengeaux told that meeting of the American Association of Teachers of French in New Orleans. He said:

*We must act rapidly if ethnic languages in the U.S. are not to become the exclusive property of a handful of linguistic aristocrats in our universities.*

We Louisianians will not let this happen in our State.

Not with Governor Edwin Edwards who, in opinions polled by the American Press of Lake Charles in the fall of 1971, said:

*I will do everything in my power to encourage the continued production of French language... Unfortunately, this unique advantage and asset are grave danger of being lost. CODOFIL has rendered the State a singular service in seeking to fortify and expand the French language amongst all the people of the State.*

Not with Superintendent of Education Louis Michot saying, in that same poll:

*This great Nation and Louisiana must end linguistic provincialism and Louisiana is uniquely situated to develop a true bilingualism... I am a member of the CODOFIL board of directors and an active supporter of CODOFIL since its organization.*

And Lieutenant Governor James Fitzmorris saying:

*I applaud the efforts of those attempting to rekindle interest in the French culture, customs and culture in our State, and in our educational system... I want you to know that I support you toward the fulfillment of such a goal.*

And Attorney General William Guste saying:

*French is one of the great diplomatic and commercial languages of the world. But even more important, it is a bridge to a large percentage of the world’s population with whom we want to create an even greater friendship. I sincerely hope that Louisiana will set the pace for the rest of the Nation in our ability to share a common language.*

Not with State Secretary Wade O. Martin who said in the CODOFIL Parish Chapter Manual:

*Louisiana without its million and a half French-speaking citizens would be quite another State. Everyone who speaks this beautiful language knows its tremendous value and importance to the State’s culture, its heritage and its economy. No movement is more important to all our people than the development and retention of the French language.*
It makes the whole State, and all the citizens of the State, unique in this Nation.

Not with the Legislature which, after having unanimously created CODOFIL, reiterated 4 years later its full support of the movement with a concurrent resolution, introduced by Senator Edgar Gonzague Mouton, chairman of the education committee of the Louisiana Senate, to commend the chairman of CODOFIL and which said:

... the development, utilization and preservation of the French language in this State is vital to the continuation of much that is unique about Louisiana, and in order to accomplish these goals the teaching of French in the schools of this State is of utmost importance and must be an integral part of efforts to preserve the French language tradition in the State...

Not with a million and half people demanding to save and develop their native language and heritage and another 2½ million backing, and participating in that demand.