To Celebrate U.S. Bicentennial

Radio-France Calls On CODOFIL’s Aid in Major Louisiana Project

LAFAYETTE — Louisiana will help France celebrate the United States Bicentennial, according to CODOFIL Chairman James Domenguez.

Radio-France, the French National Network, is planning a major Louisiana project from April 25 to May 10, 1976 and has asked CODOFIL to organize it.

The time is chosen to take advantage of the interest in the Bicentennial which would be generated by the intended visit to the United States of French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing from May 17 to May 20, 1976.

Part of the Project will involve a large exhibit about Louisiana, its history, its folklore, its resources, its people, and especially its French heritage. This exhibit will be housed in the Maison de la Radio, a gigantic exhibition palace in Paris.

As a Prelude to the visit of the Louisiana delegation, Radio-France has arranged to send 25 French journalists from Paris and the provinces to Louisiana. These journalists will travel the state, and each will establish contacts with Louisianans in general, but especially with the ones who are visiting their provinces.

CODOFIL feels this Bicentennial participation and the resulting exposure will be an extraordinary opportunity to make Louisiana better known in France and to develop the cultural and linguistic bonds between our peoples. Louisiana’s invitation to twenty-five Louisianans makes extremely feasible the organization of their visit, as well as that of other groups and individuals to journey to France during the bicentennial celebration.

He said the plans include the chartering of a flight to Paris for members of three well-known academic bands, a marching band of at least forty-five outstanding high school students, delegations of students from municipal schools which have twinned or plan to twin with towns in France, government officials, and persons interested in visiting.

The Exhibit, to be called “Louisiana Yesterday and Today,” will be organized by a committee headed by Glenn R. Conrad, director of the Center for Louisiana Studies of the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette. It will cover seven main areas:

1. “The Geography of Louisiana. Yesterday and Today” will show the impact of the natural environment on economic, social and cultural life. It will display the variety and richness of the flora and fauna, and the uniqueness of Louisiana’s geographic features.

2. “Louisiana History. Yesterday and Today” will give a panoramic view of Louisiana’s history from the early French and Spanish explorations to the modern day. It will stress the French contribution, yet underline the ethnic variety of settlement.

3. “The People of Louisiana. Faces of Yesterday and Today” will consist of a collection of Louisianas faces during 300 years, using engravings, portraits, photographs, documents, in order to emphasize ethnic, social, and occupational variety.

4. “Louisiana Arts and Crafts. Yesterday and Today” will display examples of Louisiana crafts such as weaving, quilting, basketry, folk toys as well as iron works, dolls and spool dolls, sun-bonnets, hand-curved decoys; garments and artifacts from St. Martinville Parade. Part of this section will be devoted to primitive painters and to early watercolor decorations such as shadow boxes, samplers and “mourning” pictures.

5. “Louisiana: Yesterday and Today” will document through tapes and slides the achievements of French spoken in Louisiana: Cajun as spoken in different parishes; Creole as spoken in the Mississippi delta; French as spoken among New Orleans Creoles. It will also feature a comprehensive display of Louisiana French writings from Julian Poydras’ epic poem celebrating Galvez’ 1778 victory over the British to current bilingual publications.

6. “The City and the Country: Yesterday and Today” will include photographs and artifacts related to the various aspects of Louisianan life. It will present the architecture, Mardi Gras, jazz bands, and other cultural attractions. This section will be coordinated by the Historic New Orleans Collection.

7. Beginning with the early navigation on the bayous and the rivers, the steamboats, and the railroad to modern highways, planes, and helicopters, transportation has played a major part in shaping the economy and culture of Louisiana. A section about transportation will stress pictorially, typical Louisiana aspects such as the Ponchartrain Causeway, the Bonnet Carre Spillway, the Atchafalaya Highway as well as the early modes of transportation such as pirogues, flatboats, steamboats and railroads.

The countryside section will sketch Louisiana’s natural resources. It will first of all give a comprehensive chronological history of Louisiana staple crops: cane, rice, sweet potatoes, soy beans, and their impact on the landscape and economy. The fishing industry will also be featured with crawfish, crab, shrimp, and oysters. There will be sections about the hot pepper industry, about salt mining, and about the fur industry. A large part of this section will be devoted to the oil industry and its development with emphasis on offshore operations.

This section’s unique will also endeavor to show the relation between natural resources and Louisiana’s cuisine. It will also attempt to show the impact of natural resources on Louisiana’s lifestyle. Country music, a one-room Acadian cottage to the ante-bellum mansion, will also be covered.

This exhibit will be presented through the eyes of the children.

Dr. Timothy Reilly of the USL Geography Department agreed to plan and assemble the geography section; the USL School of Art and Architecture will coordinate the third section, “The Faces of Louisiana.” Mrs. Beverly Latimer, Curator of the Lafayette Museum of Natural History and Planetarium will handle the Arts and Crafts section; Mrs. Jacqueline Voorhies, USL Department of foreign languages will curate “French in Louisiana” section.

Dr. Robert Bush and the University of New Orleans Collection are taking charge of the New Orleans part. The USL School of Architecture will gather the architecture and art exhibit. Mr. Herman Miere, USL School of Architecture will design the entire exhibit.

Various state agencies, such as the Tourist Development Commission, the Park Commission and the Wildlife and Fishery Division, have made available all the photographs they have in their files.