SLI President Speaks On Schools And Recreation

Exhilarating the wealth and resources of Louisiana, Joel L. Fletcher, president of Southwestern Louisiana Institute, told the State Recreation Association this week that "our children are our most precious resource."

In a talk entitled "Recreation and the Schools," Fletcher addressed some 30 municipal and industrial recreation executives at a banquet at Jacob's Four Corners, Lafayette. They came from throughout the state to attend a two-day meeting in Lafayette. Wednesday night's state banquet climaxed a full day of sessions on recreation at the Community Center where further discussion meetings were held today until noon.

Fletcher told the executives never to apologize when asking for funds which will help develop the youth physically or intellectually. Noting that some groups voice concern that considerable funds are going for education, the president stated that Louisiana spends $120 million for education but for welfare, hospitals and penitentiaries, the state spends $133 million.

He cited figures which showed that $1 1/2 million for education and $1,750,000 for welfare were expended for Lafayette parish last year.

"Let us spend more to prevent human disaster," he urged.

He pointed out that trained, well-balanced men will create greater wealth for the state and will mean fewer persons on welfare, in hospitals and penitentiaries.

"Our children haven't been prepared for these things," he added.

Citing the late Walter Hines Page, journalist and diplomat, who, 60 years ago, called attention to education in the New England area which had outstripped other regions chiefly because of its plentiful supply of trained and educated people, Fletcher asserted that Louisiana needs more trained and educated people.

He pointed out that the per capita income of the New England area was $2,049 while in the richest Southern region it was $1,045.

"They have education, training and the people to develop and not the resources like we have," the president stated.

"This can be the richest state in the Union," he declared, asserting that efforts must be redoubled to provide adequate training facilities for the educational and physical development of Louisiana.

A combination of the most important resources, trained people and the host of productive resources in the state will make Louisiana a great state was the concluding gist of the educator's talk.

Fletcher was introduced by Albert A. Domingue, superintendent of parks and playgrounds for Lafayette and past president of the association, who was host at the meeting. The response was delivered by James Ledbetter, New Iberia, president of the association.