By PATSY HAWTHORNE
Staff Reporter

Much fanfare marked the Jan. 27 groundbreaking ceremonies for the civic assembly center here. Not the least of which was the arrival of Gov. Dave Treen by state police helicopter.

Dignitaries including USL President Ray Authement, Lafayette Mayor Dud Lastrapes, city officials and members of the Acadiana Legislative delegation gathered at the site for the ceremony.

"This is a real highlight of my administration," Treen said. Joking with the crowd of 100 or so, Treen said, "I'd like to be back here in July of 1985 for the ribbon cutting, and if it could be arranged, I'd like to come in the executive helicopter."

The Republican governor was instrumental in gaining extra money for the project when the bids for the center came in several million dollars over budget. The proposed civic assembly center will cost an estimate $45 million and will take three and a half years to complete. The city of Lafayette will put up $12 million and the state will provide the other $33 million since it is a university project and USL is a state university. "The state usually funds university projects," Treen said, "and this is essentially a university project."

According to Gov. Treen, it is appropriate that such a facility be built here in Lafayette, since Lafayette is the "queen city of Louisiana" because of the amount of economic activity.

Treen went on to say it is proper that a facility such as the assembly center be built here for several reasons.

"USL is one of the outstanding universities in the country, and it's getting better all the time."

"Lafayette is strategically located," he said pointing out that the Hub City is located on the edge of one of the world's greatest natural resources, the Atchafalaya Basin, and Lafayette is economically sound due mainly to the oil industry which is extremely active in this area.

Authement also pointed out the "magnificent growth" in the area.

"Men and women with vision, energy, commitment, dedication and faith are an everpresent resource in this area. They have proven themselves to be of true value to the state and to this community," Authement said.


The wellorchestrated ceremony culminated when Authement, Treen, and Lastrapes took shovels in hand and dug into the rich ground on Congress Street near Cajun Field. Treen jokingly asked if he could take some of the rich earth home to Dodie, his wife. Mouton replied, "You just bought $45 million worth of it." As the first shovelsfull of earth were moved, a huge caterpillar started up and began turning over the earth.

When completed the civic assembly center will have a total convention seating capacity of 14,000 in addition to 40,000 square feet of exhibit space for trade shows and seating for 12,000 at basketball games.

Also, the facility will be able to accommodate 3,000 for banquets and 6,040 for theatrical events. The center will have 8,703 permanent seats, flatfloor space for three regular tennis courts and complete kitchen equipment.

Parking across the street will accomodate 3,000 automobiles while 1,000 more spaces will be available adjacent to the building.