Visiting Frenchmen Back State's French Movement

ST. MARTINVILLE — A visiting delegation from France strongly endorsed the French movement in Louisiana yesterday at a luncheon in Evangeline State Park here. They pledged to do what they could to support the efforts of the French movement.

The visitors from France included Louis Gillette and Philippe Breant, both with the Department of Cultural Affairs in France; Francis Debyser, director of the service for the teaching of the French language from France; and Jean Petoninelli, cultural consul at New Orleans.

55-60 Attend

Some 55 or 60 people — including members of CODOFIL, and local, state and area officials — attended the luncheon. The program was carried out almost entirely in French.

Gillette told the audience the French movement in Louisiana may very well be even more important than the leaders of CODOFIL realize. He said, "You can be sure of the heritage of Louisiana and it is something the people should not want to abandon."

James Domengeaux, chairman of CODOFIL, noted that one-third of the people in Louisiana speak French.

Found Short

He said it has been difficult to get the legislature to appropriate funds, for the French movement.

"We have got to show the legislature that the French program is as good for Louisiana as any of the other programs being funded," he said. "Promotion of the French language would attract tourists and the tourists' dollar."

Must Work Now

He urged those people at the luncheon to work hard now to spread the French language.

"If you let the opportunity go by now, 15 years from now the opportunity will be behind you," he said.

He delighted the audience, which had jammed the park lodge dining room, when he urged, "Long live Louisiana. Long live French in Louisiana."

Debyser said French is part of the heritage of Louisiana and it is something the people should not want to abandon."

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