

State and Local

Group wants English as state language

By Melanie Perkins
Staff Writer

"There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism," President Theodore Roosevelt said in a speech before the Knights of Columbus in New York City on October 12, 1915. "The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a jumble of squabbling nationalities."

This is just what the American Ethnic Coalition is trying to prevent, says Lou Zaeske of Bryan, founder and chairman of the non-partisan, non-profit organization working for a constitutional amendment that would make English the official language of both Texas and the United States of America.

"We have room for but one language here and that is the English language," Roosevelt continued, "for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boardinghouse."

Zaeske says the membership of the AEC couldn't agree more. They believe the English language is what holds our nation together, and, to be able to properly partake of the American Dream, it is necessary to be proficient in English. Bilingualism, trilingualism or quadrilingualism serve only to divide the nation along ethnic lines, Zaeske says.

The AEC was founded in Bryan on July 4, 1986, the same day the Statue of Liberty was rededicated after 100 years of "symbolizing American freedom to peoples of all nations."

The founding stemmed from the gratifying experiences last year of Zaeske and Bill Toney, vice chairman of the organization.

Zaeske was the floor leader of an attempt to place a pro-English plank in the Republican Party state platform at its convention, while Toney was the floor leader of a similar attempt at the Democratic State Convention. Both attempts failed, and the AEC was born.

Zaeske says the coalition feels specific legislation needs to be established that will make English the official language of Texas and the

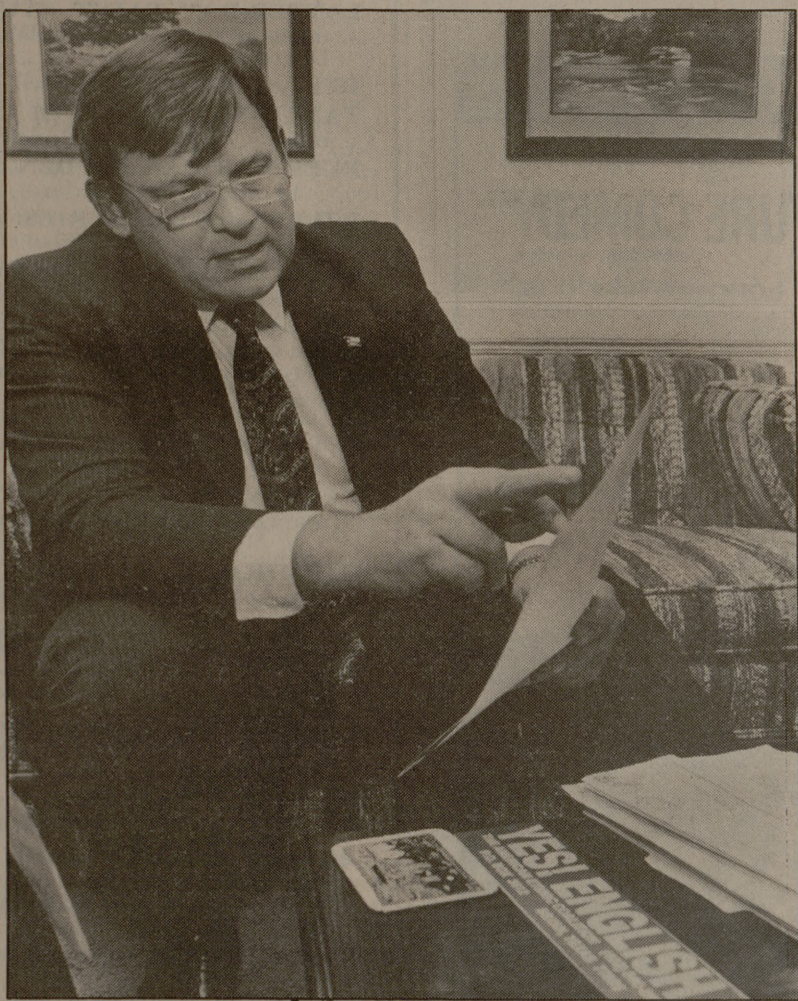


Photo by Dean Saito

Lou Zaeske of Bryan, founder and chairman of the American Ethnic Coalition, explains some of the group's proposals.

United States, and that the AEC is now circulating a petition.

"In recent times, there seems to be some ethnic minorities who want to cling to their language to the detriment of themselves and to our nation as well," Zaeske says.

Nebraska, Georgia, Virginia, Illinois, Kentucky, California, and Indiana have already adopted English as their official state language, and Florida is currently working toward this goal.

But the AEC is not without opposition, especially by Hispanic and Asian-American organizations, some of which see the movement as an English-only movement, which, Zaeske says, it is not.

In an Aug. 21 article in the *Houston Chronicle*, Oscar Moran of San Antonio, national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens said, "The English-only movement sends the negative message to language minority groups

that if they chose to be actively bilingual they are perceived to be un-American or unpatriotic."

Rep. Gregory Luna, D-San Antonio, resents the move to make English the official language of Texas.

"We who grew up as I did — speaking Spanish first — should not be subjected to feeling like a class less patriotic," Luna says.

He also says a linguistic variety is needed or further discrimination will result.

Rep. Frank Madla, D-San Antonio, says the Texas Legislature has far more important issues — like tort reform, budget, education — facing it this session.

"By custom, English is already our language," Madla says.

Closer to home, Marcelo Villena, president of the International Students Association at A&M, says if English was to be proclaimed the official language of the state of Texas, much of what the different cultures have to offer would be lost.

A related objective of the AEC is to abolish bilingual education as it now exists.

Zaeske says the bilingual program only causes students to cling to their native language because they are not really motivated to ease their way into the American public.

Madla says he has had references concerning bilingual education for quite some time and is for revamping the program.

"Bilingual education needs to emphasize students moving into an all English classroom as quickly as possible," he says.

The bilingual program segregates students for years, Zaeske says, and some even graduate from high school in places like Brownsville functionally illiterate in English.

"There are leaders — self-styled leaders not necessarily of Spanish or Mexican extraction — who would like nothing better than to keep these people trapped by language in a subtle form of serfdom," Zaeske says.

True freedom is economic freedom, he says, and economic freedom is not possible in this country without a functional knowledge of English. Zaeske says people who

don't have this knowledge are trapped because they have to rely on others for information.

In place of bilingual education, Zaeske strongly supports the concept of "total immersion," which involves teaching various subjects in English rather than bilingually, or teaching English before going on to other subjects. An example of the latter is the English Language Institute at Texas A&M, where international students learn English — grammar, reading, speaking, listening, talking and writing — before they begin their studies at A&M.

Luna says total immersion would probably be appropriate for adult education, but a child would suffer trauma.

The bilingual education controversy started in the late 1970s when the U.S. Supreme Court ordered a California school district to provide transitional instruction to help an Oriental girl named Lau to learn English, Zaeske says.

"Since this time, a move for bilingual education has been afoot, mainly by the Hispanic minority in California, New Mexico and Texas, who seized upon this as a way to reinforce their culture at taxpayers' expense," he says.

Bilingual programs by law are supposed to incorporate the cultural aspects of a student's background, Zaeske says. He pointed out that he is half German and half Czech, and didn't have his ethnic heritage reinforced at taxpayers' expense — and that it shouldn't have been.

"I do believe every ethnic minority in this country should take pride in its ethnic heritage," he says, "but the bottom line is that we are a nation united and there are few things in this country that really unite us as a country. Language is one of them."

The AEC also is committed to doing whatever necessary to end illegal immigration into the United States.

"Immigration to America should be in the legal, dignified manner American citizenship deserves," Zaeske says, "and not over the fence like thieves in the night."

U.S. defector's mail piles up at post office

HOUSTON (AP) — Mail addressed to Arnold Lockshin's house in Houston has not been forwarded since the cancer researcher and his family defected to the Soviet Union last fall, postal officials confirmed.

Since Lockshin and his family announced at a Moscow news conference that they were relocating to escape U.S. political oppression, their mail has been piling up at a local post office.

The South Post Oak Post Office has a change of address order on file for the Lockshin family, but has not acted on it because it was not signed by the Lockshins personally, U.S. Postal Service spokesman Forrest Rogers said Wednesday.

Rogers said the form was signed by a Florida woman, whose name he did not disclose.

When Houston postal officials received the change of address order Oct. 22, they asked U.S. Postal Service lawyers whether they should honor it, Rogers said. The lawyers advised them to begin returning the Lockshins' mail back to the senders in 30 days if no other word was received from the couple.

Correction

A Jan. 23 article in *The Battalion* on University construction stated that the new Chemistry Building will be used primarily for research while the old building will be renovated and used for classrooms and laboratories. The information was received from Dan Whitt, assistant vice chancellor for facilities planning and construction. However, Michael B. Hall, head of the chemistry department, informs *The Battalion* that the new Chemistry Building will be primarily for undergraduate teaching.

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