French Senator Speaks about U.S.–French Relations

André Maman, a member of the French Senate, presented a special lecture in September sponsored by the departments of West European Studies and French & Italian, and CREDLI (Committee for Research and Development in Language Instruction). He mixed his message of Franco-American friendship with a number of friendly warnings. On the Bloomington campus to speak to a group of faculty and students, Maman said that the single greatest point of tension between the two countries is the perception by many French that the United States poses a cultural and linguistic threat to the young people of France due to the popularity of American television, film, and music. To underscore his point, he used an example: “We do not feel threatened by Japan. We do not think about Japan. But the United States is the standard by which we judge ourselves. We love America. But sometimes we get defensive when we think that you want too much.”

Maman’s lecture included a brief history of Franco-American relations from the era of Charles de Gaulle to the present with President Jacques Chirac. During the Cold War era, de Gaulle’s vision of being a leader of the “non-aligned nations” contributed to the development of an independent French nuclear strike force. While Maman seemed at pains to defend the recent resumption of nuclear testing for which France is being almost universally criticized, he was very optimistic about the future prospects of the European Union. A new united Europe will be an economic superpower larger than the United States in both population and Gross National Product, he said. At the same time, he acknowledged a certain lack of American interest in the new Europe, as evidenced by the paucity of articles in the American press. For him, the greatest threat to a united Europe comes from ultra-nationalist right-wing parties such as France’s National Front, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen. Maman ended his talk by encouraging American students to study French and to try understanding the French perspective, while acknowledging that English is also rapidly developing as a “second native language.”

Senator Maman knows the United States well, having spent 30 years as a professor of French at Princeton University. In 1992, he was elected as one of 12 senators to represent French citizens living abroad, spending half the year in Paris, and the other half traveling around the world to meet his constituents and explain the French perspective to foreigners.

School of Education Welcomes International Students and Scholars

The Faculty International Programs Committee and the Dean of the School of Education hosted an October reception for visiting scholars and new and returning international students in the atrium of the Education Building. Approximately 125 persons attended the reception and several students expressed their pleasure with the event. Noriko Hara of Japan, a graduate student in Instructional Systems Technology, commented that the reception gave her the “opportunity to see and meet other international students, faculty, and staff.” Tahsin Khalid of Pakistan, a doctoral student in Science Education, remarked, “it was very nice to be recognized in this way.”

This fall semester saw nearly 200 international students enrolled in the School at the Bloomington campus. These numbers reflect the growing interest in IU abroad as well as the commitment of the School in recruiting and serving an international population. Nita Levison, the coordinator of the Office of the International and Diversity Programs, greeted the guests and introduced University Dean Donald Warren, who offered a welcome to the visiting scholars and students and introduced the departmental chairpersons and their visiting scholars. Among the guests were OIP Associate Dean Kenneth Rogers and Associate Director Ruth Miller from the Office of International Services. The reception included a musical performance by a woodwind trio consisting of student musicians from IU’s School of Music. The trio was led by Alan Portzline, a graduate assistant in the School of Education.

The reception was the first event offered and planned by the newly created Office of International and Diversity Programs in the School of Education. The position was funded by a gift to the School from an anonymous donor and designed to enhance and support the educational and social opportunities and experiences of international students on the Bloomington campus. An International Student Advisory Council has been formed and will plan events for the coming semester.

For further information, contact Nita Levison; tel: (812) 856-8042; email: nlevison@indiana.edu