

## I.Q. TESTING IN ENGLISH: SPANISH-SPEAKING

SOLEDAD, January 8 -- Intelligence tests conducted in English are channeling a large number of bright Spanish-speaking youngsters into "mentally retarded" classes in the California public school system, parents of a group of 9 Mexican-American children charged here today. Assisted by the California Rural Legal Assistance, the parents filed suit against the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Soledad School District, seeking to

get the children out of the classes for the mentally retarded and put them into a regular school program.

According to a CRLA study, 26 per cent of the children in California's "EMR" (Educable Mentally Retarded) classes were Spanish-surnamed, while such students comprise only 13 percent of the total school population.

The suit demands that all Spanish-speaking children currently placed in EMR classes be retested by a qualified bi-lingual tester.

The CRLA suit alleges that the current practice of testing Spanish-speaking children in English forces them to spend an average of 3 years in classes with mental retardates. It further alleges: "Placement in one of these classes is tantamount to a life sentence of illiteracy and public dependency. The stigma that attaches from such placement causes ridicule from other children and produces a profound sense of shame in the child. It is therefore of paramount importance that

## CHILDREN CONSIDERED RETARDED

no child be placed in such a class unless it is clear beyond reasonable doubt that he suffers from an impairment of ability to learn."

At the request of the children's parents, the nine children bringing the suit were retested by a bilingual accredited psychologist using tests in Spanish, as well as English. Seven of the nine children scored higher than the maximum score used by the school district as the ceiling for mental retardates. These seven ranged from 2 to 19

points above the maximum with an average of 8 1/2 points over the cut-off. One of the other two scored right on the line, and the ninth was three points below. The IQ scores of these children were raised an average of 15 points over those of the English tests, with one score improving 49 points. These results were presented to the local school superintendent, but all the children still are forced to remain in the class for mental retardates.

In addition to the complete unre-

liability of English IQ tests when administered to children whose primary language is Spanish, the complaint alleges that the tests are culturally biased against rural Mexican-American children. The test includes such questions as "Who wrote Romeo and Juliet?" "What is the color of rubies?" and "Why is it better to pay bills by check than by cash?" (a difficult question for a child whose parents have never had a bank account.)

## Teaching Fantasy:

Not true

Debra Rojas, 9, displays picture of nattily dressed grape picker in her social studies textbook at St. Joseph School, Manchester. The account of grape picking in California is an unrealistic, rosy account of what is really a hard life, say her parents, former migrant workers.



## Every 4th Grader Should Know-- Farm Work Is Fun

By BILL McCLINTON

Debra Rojas is only nine years old, but she knows something about the migrant worker's life.

Her parents are migrants, and as a tot she was taken into California's crop fields while her mother spent the day picking.

So when Debra read about grape picking in her fourth-grade social studies book at St. Joseph School in Manchester, she could compare. And it didn't sound like the life she knew.

Debra brought the book home where her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Rojas, examined it. The Rojas are the leaders of the grape boycott movement in Pittsburgh, coming here from California. They found the account of grape picking "absurd."

"What is written in that book is so ridiculous it's not even funny," Mrs. Rojas said this week. "I've worked all my life in the fields, starting when I was about five or six, picking cotton, grapes, prunes, apricots. What that book describes is horribly untrue."

The book is *At Home Around the World*, published by Ginn and Co. and copyrighted in 1958. This most recent edition came out in 1965.

The chapter describing grape pick-

ing tells of a California rancher's children, Jim and Jane, who live in a big white ranch house at the end of a tree-shaded driveway. They visit a neighboring ranch where grape picking is described this way:

"There was something exciting about seeing people picking grapes. Men and women in blue jeans, bright-colored shirts, and big hats moved up and down the long rows. Sometimes the pickers called back and forth to each other. Now and then one of them sang part of a song . . ."

And on Jim and Jane's own ranch: "Sometimes all the pickers seemed to be doing the same thing at the same time. It was like watching a machine do the same thing over and over. Pick, bend, rise. Pick, bend, rise. Jane said the words to herself. It was like doing gym exercises together."

Migrant workers are described briefly as "people who move from place to place to work at different seasons. The cars in which they travel from one job to another were parked nearby. The children go from one school to another as their parents follow the crop harvests. . . ."

"Why don't they tell about all the kids working in those fields under the summer sun?" Mrs. Rojas said. "I would be out in the fields at 6 a.m. and pick all day. There were no breaks, no water, no bathroom. I

wish it was like the book says."

After a carefree summer watching crops being harvested, Jim and Jane go back to school. "But they looked forward to long Saturdays of fun on the ranch," the book says.

Sister Janet Brink, a Benedictine who teaches Debra's social studies class, agreed the story is unrealistic. "Everything is made to seem nice and gay and carefree. It's not reality. The work is glorified like it's a game."

This is nothing uncommon for social studies texts, she indicated; too often what is depicted is not reality.

"It's not what people are going through. And social studies teachers tend to take the books at their face value. They aren't acquainted with the facts," she said, adding:

"Debbie asked to stand up and tell our class about the migrant's life. She taught them a lesson I never could have."

Sister Mary Judith, a Vincentian nun who is chairman of the school office's board of supervisors, said there has been no previous complaint about the book. It is one of two social studies books approved for fourth grade use in diocesan schools.

The above story is taken from the "Pittsburgh Catholic," of November 14, 1969.