LIFE WITHE U.S.

Intelligence tests weed out brightest

By lack Saunders Pacific News Service

If you hope your children will one day attend college, land professional jobs and become leaders of the next generation, you can help them by being white, wealthy and well educated.

According to a growing number of educators, the outfits testing students' fitness for higher education write exams that privileged kids do marvelously well on.

The most prominent such organization, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), was once called "the nation's gatekeeper" by one of its executives. An unregulated, non-profit corporation, ETS takes in more than \$50 million a year giving basic skill tests to grade and secondary school children plus admission exams for college, law, graduate and business schools and a host of trade institutions.

The College Board, which hires ETS to give the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) used by most colleges in admissions, has found a strict link between income and SAT scores. Every year since 1970, when the board began studying the problem, wealthy students have done better than middle class students and those from poor families have come in last.

Critics like Leo P. Ruth, head of the Berkeley School of Education's secondary education division, say affluent children have the edge because their families give them experiences that later pop up as test questions—experiences like travel, highly cultured entertainment and exposure to educated adult vocabularies.

Worried by this and other aspects of mass testing, the National Education Association called for a moratorium on standardized tests in 1975.

And in September 1976, 40 teacher and school administrator groups-including major organizations like the American Federation of Teachers and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers—met to form an alliance for test reform.

Dubbing themselves the National Consortium on Testing, theh called for an investigation of all mass testing and a halt to IQ tests of young children. They contend that:

•many standardized tests are inaccurate:

estudents are consequently mislabeled:

*a racial bias is now widely acknowledged to be inherent in most tests;

esome young children are traumatized by over-testing, learning to fear

•and the significance of test results is severely limited by the absence of common agreement on what superior performance is.

Norms are not representative.

The biggest focus of criticism has been that test norms are frequently not as representative as testers claim. Often they are samples of a few thousand children taken in isolated areas of the country and sometimes years out of date.

"In light of the cultural mosaic that is America," says Edmund Farrell, head of the National Council of (College) Teachers of English, "it is nonsense to talk about national norms against which the achievements of an individual or a group can be accurately compared.

"The sample populations selected to norm tests are not always representative in time or place or race of the communities of students who take the tests."

"Parents who have not had an elevated education and have not accumulated reading material in the home send their children to ampute with students who have a lifespan of learning," adds Judy Jones, assistant director of the College Board's western regional office.

3. ABCDE 3. Scarcity of resources in relation to desires or needs occurs (B) only under socialism (A) only under capitalism (D) in all societies (C) only during wartime (E) in money-using societies 4. ADCDE 4. The percentage of our work force in agricultural pursuits in 1800 was about (E) 95% (D) 75% (C) 50% (B) 33% (A) 20% 5. ABCOU The main reason for organizing the C.I.O. in the 1930s was to (A) organize Negroes and immigrants who seldom belonged to a labor union (B) organize mass-production workers (C) escape the high fees of the A.F. of L. (D) organize craft workers (E) organize white-collar workers 1000 6. In what part of the world HOW SMART ARE YOU? as to percentage and quality (A) North America (B) Europe (C) Australia (D) Moslem Middle East

"The low income students bring to the SAT only what they have learned in the classroom. And so the data we're talking about shouldn't be surprising to anyone.'

But according to Jones, the College Board is satisfied with the SAT despite its findings. It believes ETS is testing what it wants tested: a student's ability to function in college.

➤ "We predict college performance."

(E) Japan

ETS is especially sensitive on the discrimination charge because of a skeleton in the corporate closet. Carl Brigham, inventor of the SAT and writer of the first test in 1948, was a psychologist who three years earlier had written "A Study of American Intelligence." One conclusion: whites are more intelligent than non-whites.

But today ETS, careful to express its concern about the discrimination problem, defends itself along lines similar to the thinking of the College Board.

"SAT is a good predictor of freshman college performance," ETS Director John Smith says. "It realistically reflects what the student will bring to the college."

Poor, culturally deprived youngsters

will not do well in college, ETS reason: and the tests simply predict that.

'Criticizing us on that score," ETS President William Turnbull said, "is like criticizing the Toledo Scale Company because some people are fat."

But some educators believe that students from poor backgrounds can and should be helped through college by special programs—if they can just pass the admission threshold. Ron Drucker, who runs such a program at Berkeley, says, "With tutoring and with reading and writing study help, my overall impression is that students who are admitted at somewhat higher risk to the university do remarkably well." This is substantiated, Drucker says, by yearly studies on specialhelp students submitted by the University to its Board of Regents.

► Brightest students weeded out.

ETS also comes under criticism for the random variations built into its testswhich, thanks to tight admissions competition, can threaten a college career.

ETS states clearly that there is one chance in three that an SAT score will be wrong—30 points too high or too low on a middling 600 score. That's not bad, the testers insist. As an ETS booklet explains, a 65-70 point difference between two students is meaningless and "should not be taken seriously."

But colleges often proceed otherwise. Ten college admissions officers polled in 1974 by New York magazine writer Stephen Brill agreed unanimously that a 60point test error on the low side could well bar an otherwise qualified student from

Some test experts even claim that standardized tests like the SAT really weed out the brightest students, a contention that is at least partially supported by a Bowdoin College survey.

The highly rated Maine school, which has dropped the SAT requirement, found that less than one-third of its honor students had entered with above-average SAT scores. And in fact, one-fourth of its top students had low scores. At the same time, when faculty members were asked to list privately those students that "Bowdoin could do without," the high SAT achievers accounted for more than

The multiple choice SAT format, says Prof. Banesh Hoffman of Queens College in New York, forces testers to ask pointblank questions. The especially intelligent student, Hoffman says, will see subtleties that escaped the testmaker and pick the wrong answer.

Charles Suhor, English supervisor of the New Orleans school system, says the standardized test helps the student whowhile drilled full of middle class information—is also somewhat docile and a bit dull.

"Standardized tests require, above all, the ability to endure long periods of boredom," he says. "They require a patient and uncritical attitude in performance of highly arbitrary, disjointed tasks."

Jack Saunders, a technical writer at the Lawrence Livermore Radiation Laboratory, is a frequent contributor to PNS specializing in science and educa-

If you're smart, turn the other cheek

The winnowing process that eventually selects those who will be doctors, lawyers and politicians starts early with IQ tests.

Many think the widely used Weschler Intelligence Scale for Childrenknown as WISC—is a test that can wisk minority children into society's dustbin before they reach puberty.

Given orally to children between ages five and 15, the point is to see how close the tested children come to answers given by 2,200 white youngsters in 1949. Children who answer as that "norm" group did are deemed intelli-

For example: "What would you do if a fellow much smaller than you started a fight?"

The child who answers that as encouraged by the typical middle class Sunday school—turn one's cheek and walk away-gets maximum points for intelligence.

A kid reared in a subculture where no one admits walking away from a fight indicates a lack of intelligence.

Studies show the WISC test even more unreliable than the SAT. In 1964, 99 psychologists gave the same WISC test to a single youngster. That child's scores ranged from 63 to 117-from idiocy to intelligence.

Jane Mercer, a University of Cali-

fornia at Riverside sociologist found during the 1960s that IQ tests were branding as "retarded" twice as many black children and four times as many Mexican-American youngsters as experts could account for according to normal proportions of the population.

"The tests," she says, "were drawing items from the mainstream of Anglo culture. Intelligence was defined as the ability to speak English and an acquaintance with Anglo culture."

Federal courts since have ordered the re-testing of 22,000 Mexican-American students in California classified as "mentally retarded" on the basis of the English language IQ tests. Those who have been re-tested in Spanish show some improvement. Nevertheless, the white middle class background that even the translated questions demand continues to drag scores down.

A 1974 federal law now requires that schools taking federal money use tests that are "not racially or culturally discriminatory." Efforts to comply are not far advanced in most states. California has set up a board of minority experts to review all tests formulated by the state. In testimony before the California State Board of Education in December, Mercer recommended a new system of several tests to replace the single IQ test.

Testers using her method would interview a child's parents and give tests that show how the child learns outside the school. "If we can determine that a child is coping well in the neighborhood," she says, "and getting along well with friends, learning how to go to the store, traveling around the city, then we have evidence of learning ability. We can say the child is not retarded. Then it's the school's job to supply the Anglo culture."

Knowing nothing about students except their family backgrounds, the Mercer research group is able to predict which students will test poorly. With some accuracy they are able to say what fraction of the low showing is due to nothing more than family background.

Using that kind of analysis Mercer is now helping refine a sort of handicapping system that will allow educators to calculate an adjusted IO by taking cultural background and income out of the picture.

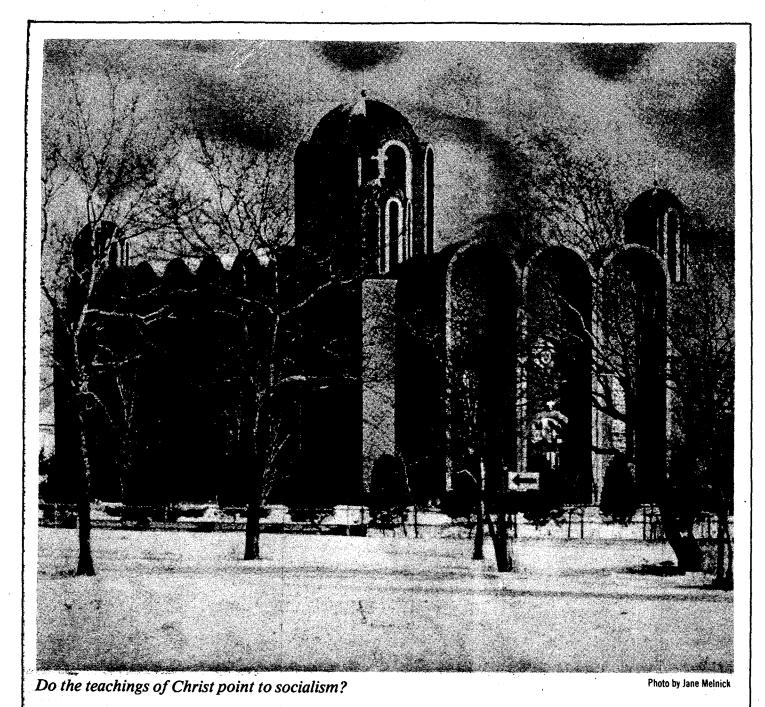
The system is also being tried with some success in Pueblo, Colo.

"The testing industry thrives," says the Berkeley School of Education's Leo Ruth, "on our naivete about standardized tests and the illusion of certainty where none exists."

Trouble is, the results can stick.

-Jack Saunders

Christians for socialism



By Judy MacLean

Staff Writer "Religion," Karl Marx once said, "is the opiate of the people." Mainstream religious leaders since Marx have had far less flattering things to say about socialism. So at first glance American Christians Toward Socialism (ACTS) seems an unlikely group. And it seems even more unlikely that it is part of a world-wide network known as Christians for Socialism, whose purpose is changing Christianity into a revolutionary force.

The movement began in Chile, where there had been a tradition of socially-oriented church involvement in the government under the Christian Democratic administration of Eduardo Frei. When Salvador Allende's Marxist-led coalition was elected, the response of the church hierarchy was opposition. But many priests and nuns who ministered to poor and working people had learned through reform work that only a socialist society could really help their parishoners. These clergy joined with other Catholic activists and formed Christians for Socialism, which actively supported Allende's government and publicly tried to persuade the Catholic church to do likewise.

When Allende's government was overthrown by military coup, over a hundred members of the group were thrown in prison, many to face torture and death. Others escaped and are working with Christian Socialist groups that have sprung up in many countries in this hemisphere as well as Europe and Asia.

ACTS is, as Joseph Holland of Washington D.C.'s Center for Concern describes it, "small, weak and humble." But he thinks "it's ringing a lot of bells for people."

► Remain legitimate Christians.

Like its counterparts in other countries, ACTS does not stand outside of various Chrisitan churches. Members remain in the churches, struggling to make them forces for revolutionary change.

In Spain, Christians for Socialism called upon the Catholic church to confess its sins during the period of fascist dictatorship under Franco.

In the U.S., says Kathleen Schultz, national executive secretary of the group, ACTS will try to get churches to repent of the past and establish a new kind of

revolutionary practice. Once ACTS establishes a presence, they intend to struggle against being marginalized by the hierarchy here," she says.

According to ACTS, ideological forces -like religion and mass media-play an even stronger role in keeping working people in support of the status quo. If religion can become a force for revolution, a powerful tool of the ruling class will be

"We challenge the interclassism of the church," says Schultz. Christian love, she says, has been used to defend the idea that, for example, "Detroit's unemployed and Henry Ford and Max Fisher can sit down and have a good time. This obscures class differences in the name of peace, charity, gospel and faith."

►Is God a Marxist?

Most ACTS chapters run study groups, have educational events or celebrations that involve people in religious study from a Marxist viewpoint. "Is God a Marxist?" was the title of a recent Bay Area workshop. Many of their larger counterparts in other countries do the same. Christian socialists in Italy run over 16,000 Bible study

"When I first heard that," says Kathare political Christians doing trying to mobilize people with Bible study? But the political situation there makes the difference, the interpretation of scripture is radicalizing."

bers of ACTS don't form a separate party, but join other parties and organizations. That makes the situation somewhat more difficult in the U.S. than in countries like Italy where Christians for Socialorganized left.

"It's unclear where people's and workers' movements and left organizations tap into people's religious tradition, and are at this time," says Schultz. "There's show that socialism does not contradict no clear strategy for the left as a whole— that tradition."

not even an instrumentality for finding that."

►A new theology.

The Christian socialist movement has its own theologians and theology—a theory of liberation, they call it. German-born theologian Dorothy Solle describes how Christianity, practiced right, leads to Marxism: If you love your neighbor and pay attention to your own experiences, "vou want to understand the cause of your neighbor's misery, and to bring about changes. The person who is genuinely compassionate will eventually hit granite—the structures of property and society, the injustice inherent in the class system. When such a new phase has been reached, it is high time to read Karl Marx."

This new theology holds that Christianity has been robbed of its revolutionary message by too long an association with the capitalist class. Theologians of liberation, like Solle or Chilean exile Gonzalo Arrovo, believe they are recapturing Christ's basic message and that Marxism provides a scientific method for putting the gospel into practice.

In this view, Christianity is actually a liberating and democratic belief system that is inherently socialist, but the proper interpretation of the scriptures hasn't been done because it would offend the power-

Liberation theology has its conservative critics. Catholic columnist Michael Novak calls it "a fad which should be resisted." His colleague Andrew Greeley calls liberation theologians "hate-filled people, shouting about guilt and calling

for expiation." Theologians of liberation believe there will be a need for religion under socialism. Just as Marx predicted about the state, they believe religion will only wither away as society approaches pure communism, when the community is truly functioning "from each according to his/her ability, to each according to his/her needs." Until then, the church will play a role, but it will be, according to Gonzalo Arroyo, "a poorer church deprived and divested of privilege, and also a church less institutionalized." Such a church would "incarnate new forms of Christian life which reject the alienating patterns of living the faith often present in capitalist societies."

► Many members in clergy.

Many ACTS members are clergy. In Iowa a group of Methodist ministers, mostly in small-town parishes, form a chapter. Do they preach socialism from the pulpit? Yes, and at least one has been demoted to a smaller, more rural parish for doing so. They also publish a sort of sermon service for other Methodist ministers. One, an Advent sermon, made a parallel between the need for repentence before the birth of Jesus with the need of the U.S. government to repent of its sins in the Third World.

Lee Cormie, a Chicago ACTS member and a theology teacher, says he began moving away from religion when religious answers to social problems seemed irrelevant. "And yet, my concern with social issues came out of my religious tradition. So Christians for Socialism has been a way to recover that tradition, to be more true to it," he said.

"The thing that attracted me," says leen Schultz, "I thought, my God, what Marcia Cormie, also of Chicago ACTS, "was that the people were not just working out a political analysis. They were also willing to reflect on the process that made them willing to engage in struggle."

"The three main elements, action, re-Like their counterparts elsewhere, mem- flection and celebration, are all important. It's a group that takes celebration seriously, as something that keeps people going, so they don't give up when they get frustrated."

"And it's not like some left groups, tryism thrives in the context of a well- ing to shove a message down people's throat," she continued. "It's a group of people working together to find ways to



A Film By Rick King