Bilingualism in Acadiana

From February through June, 1973, academic humanists will meet with a variety of groups of adults-out-of-school (henceforth "AOS") to discuss the implications of bilingualism in Acadiana. The bilingualism discussed will be Black-English/Standard - English, Black-French/White-French, as well as the more familiar French/English bilingualism. The groups will be representative of AOS who are bilingual in these various ways. Socio-economic variety will be inter, not intra-group, although each meeting will be open to the public, i.e., to members of any socio-economic class, and to students as well as to AOS.

The topic of the discussions can be posed in many interesting ways: a) Is there any basis, among the varied and complex dialects of French and Creole spoken in Acadiana, for the position that it is easier to teach our children French than, say, German? b) Will a perpetuation of French perpetuate the discrimination against French-speaking people in Acadiana, i.e. will it limit the vertical economic mobility of our children? c) Is there a culture we have worth preserving, and can it be preserved by helping our children to become articulate in international French? d) In what sense, if any, is it good to be bilingual, even if we can become articulate in both languages? e) Can we preserve our alleged culture without having to preserve French, Black - English, etc.? f) Does an inadequate knowledge of two languages make one a marginal person, one who must either grow in self-knowledge or become stagnant in frustration?

The groups of AOS so far lined up for discussion include: a) Parents of students in the bilingual program at Alice Boucher school; b) The Northside People for Progress; c) Presence Francophone Amerique. Three or four other groups are presently being contacted for participation in the program.

The program is funded through the Louisiana Committee for the Humanities, an NEH state-wide administrating committee. The academic humanists involved are: Dr. Ruth Bradley, Mrs. Jessie Taylor, Ms. Dorice Zilsel, Rev. Jude Speyrer, none of whom are affiliated with USL, and Dr. Patricia Rickels, Dr. Don Kurtz, Dr. Donald Barker, and Mr. Steven Del Sesto, all of whom teach at USL.

The time and place of each meeting will be publicized one week in advance in this paper.