

PHILIP WITTE

Next: Tests for English-only voters

THE PEOPLE have spoken. They say: No bilingual education in California, *por favor*.

English only. Pure English. American English. For Americans.

But the backers of Proposition 227 did not go far enough. We need not merely more English; we need better English. We need Prop. 227, Part II: The Test.

This calls for the immediate testing of all Californians who voted in favor of Prop. 227 to determine their proficiency in writing and speaking the English language: Natives, immigrants, fifth-generation debutantes, everyone.

The test will consist of four parts:

Examiner contributor Philip Witte is an attorney and writer in San Francisco.

Spelling: One hundred words will be selected at random from last year's state spelling bee contest. If 12-year-old immigrants can spell "s-y-z-y-g-y" correctly, the average Californian adult should have no problem.

Vocabulary: Native English speakers should breeze through this portion of the test. Californians will be required to define common English words, such as "plaintive," "laconic" and "fulsome," and use each in a sentence. Example of wrong answer: The plaintive pleaded laconic but was sent to Fulsome Prison.

Grammar: Here's the chance for native Californians to shine. Topics will include the subjunctive mood, gerunds and passive voice. Special emphasis will be placed on the differences between *lie* and *lay* and *who* and *whom*. Improper use of a semicolon will result in a grade

of zero. Tip for Southern Californians: *Mary*, *marry* and *merry* are pronounced differently.

Writing: Test-takers will write a 500-word essay on one of the following topics: review of five books read in the past year (excluding cookbooks, celebrity biographies and home computer manuals); rearing children without television; and the correlation between property values and quality of education.

Test-takers will read their essays to a panel of educators and defend their views in a half-hour question-and-answer session.

Those who flunk will be ineligible to vote, receive Social Security benefits, drive a car, play the California lottery or draft any new ballot measures. They can take an English immersion class or get a sentence, as it were, to a correctional institution.

Dangle a participle, go to jail.