

FBI Probe Of Student's Homework

Newark, N.J.

A damage suit has been filed in federal district court here charging the FBI with intercepting a letter written by a 15-year-old high school girl as part of a school project and with subsequently investigating her character and activities.

In addition to seeking \$65,000 in damages, the suit, which was filed by the Rutgers Constitutional Litigation Clinic and the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, requests a court order forbidding the FBI from intercepting or interfering with mail sent by citizens to lawful political organizations.

The plaintiffs in the suit are Lori Paton of Chester, a pupil at West Morris-Mendham high school; her father, Arthur Paton, and William Gabrielson, chairman of the school's social studies department.

LETTER

According to Frank Askin, a cooperating attorney of the ACLU, the girl wrote a letter in February requesting information about the Socialist Labor party as part

of a social studies project entitled "From Left to Right," which sought to explore various political ideologies.

"By mistake, she addressed the letter to the Young Socialist Alliance on Charles street in New York," he said, "and the organization sent her its newspaper and other material." The Young Socialist Alliance is affiliated with the Socialist Workers party.

On March 28, according to the complaint, an FBI agent visited Richard Matthews, principal of her school, and began inquiring about the girl's character and interests. Matthews reportedly became concerned that a harmless school exercise could inspire an FBI investigation, and he informed the American Civil Liberties Union of the visit.

TEACHER

Lori Paton said Matthews had immediately summoned her and the social studies teacher in the hope that they would arrive before the agent left the school.

"The agent apparently thought I had graduated," she said. "When he heard I



UPI Telephoto

LORI PATON
She's suing

was still a student and the letter was part of a class exercise, he quickly dropped ped his questioning and left."

Lori said her initial reaction to the investigation was one of disbelief. "I couldn't fully understand what was happening," she said.

"Although we want to be assured my name isn't on any lists, the main reason for the suit is the principle involved and the fact that this type of thing could really interfere with the educational process."

New York Times