

Philadelphia. Among them they gave the subcommittee a quick academic course on the state of the cloning art and concluded that there is no possibility that a human clone has been born. Mintz characterized *In His Image* as a "dull work of fiction" that is "full of scientific boners and errors."

Reading *In His Image* as if it were a mystery story has become a kind of sport for some scientists searching for clues of Rorvik's incompetence. Chief among those clues, with respect to the basic science in the book, is a colossal boo-boo about red blood cells. The scientist-hero of the story is a man named "Darwin," who manages in only 18 months to resolve all of the enormous technical and biological barriers to human cloning, including the problem of selecting a suitable type of adult donor cell from which to extract the nucleus that will "fertilize" an enucleated ovum. Darwin, obviously a man who will try anything to accomplish the feat, was, Rorvik tells us, "quite open about working with erythrocytes (red blood cells) . . ." as a possible source of a donor nucleus. What he fails to mention is that erythrocytes have no nucleus.

When it comes to clinical medicine, Darwin is not much brighter, according to Andre E. Hellegers, professor of obstetrics and gynecology and director of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University. Hellegers told the subcommittee that Darwin is so weak on fetal physiology that he does not know the difference between events that occur during the first and third trimesters of pregnancy and seems unable to correctly distinguish a zygote from an embryo from a fetus—which any obstetrician could do.

Hellegers finds that Rorvik and his characters are not much better informed when it comes to biomedical ethics, which Rorvik discusses in sanctimonious tones at great length. Thus Hellegers testified that "... one can conclude that this is not a book about the cloning of the son of Max, but rather about the clowning of David Rorvik, a functional illiterate in ethics and medicine. . . . he overreaches and places in the mouths of his experts such inanities as destroy their credibility as scientific characters."

By now, most informed persons accept the judgment that *In His Image* is fiction, not fact, and that Rorvik wrote it either as a political treatise (he sees cloning as a metaphor for "the new genetic research") or for the money (he is quoted as saying he expects to make a million dollars). By insisting that his claim is true, Rorvik has capitalized on our instinct for the bizarre—when we think

about cloning our mental image is not of a single offspring but of a thousand copies all marching down the street at once—in a way he never could have done if he admitted his baby clone is just a metaphor.

What remains a puzzle is the J. B. Lippincott Company, which published the book after other reputable publishers turned it down. "Without [Lippincott's] complicity or incompetence, this fraud could not have been perpetrated," Helle-

Endangered Species Law Reviewed

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, perhaps best known for halting the completion of the Tennessee Valley Authority's Tellico Dam in order to save the habitat of a fishy denizen of the Little Tennessee River called the snail darter, is now up for congressional reauthorization. Environmentalists have been in a mild sweat over the past year worrying about whether Congress will let the act stand unmolested. Currently they are trying to mobilize public opinion against a loophole recently approved by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Introduced by subcommittee chairman John C. Culver (D-Iowa), the proposed amendment would add "flexibility" to the law by setting up a Cabinet-level committee that could grant a public works project an exemption from the law in cases where negotiations among relevant agencies have reached a deadlock. The way the pertinent part of the law, section 7, is set up, government agencies are not allowed to fund projects that would result in the destruction of an endangered species or habitat. Construction agencies are expected to consult with the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (which contains the Office of Endangered Species). If a collision between ecology and progress appears imminent, the interested parties are supposed to get together to figure out how to modify the project so everyone's values can be saved. Usually this procedure works; in a few instances, notably Tellico, the matter has been taken to court.

Culver's proposed Cabinet-based committee would swing into action in cases where negotiations with the Fish and Wildlife Service have resulted in a stalemate. It would have seven members: the secretaries of Interior, Agriculture, the Army, and the Smithsonian Institution; the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, and the governor of the state in question. After holding formal hearings, the committee could, if no fewer than five members so decided, grant the project an exemption from section 7. According to the amendment, the committee would have to decide that there was "no reasonable and prudent alternative to the action," that it is of "national or regional significance," and that "the benefits of the action clearly outweigh the benefits of alternative courses of action consistent with conserving the species or its critical habitat and that such action is in the public interest." Boiled down, this means that an exemption would be all right if a project is deemed of greater worth to society than a species.

Culver, generally thought of as a friend of the environment, has portrayed the amendment as a way to head off far more drastic changes that some members of Congress would like to see in the act. There has been talk, for example, of inserting a grandfather clause that would exempt all projects from the act that were authorized prior to its passage—which would effectively suspend section 7 for some years.

Environmentalists, however, claim they do not see any evidence of a congressional backlash against the act and they therefore oppose any amendments at all. "Culver says he's trying to save the act," says Lewis Regenstein of the Fund for Animals. "I don't know who he's trying to save it from." Some environmentalists are ambivalent about the amendment—it could, after all, take the heat off members of Congress under political pressure to gut the law. But they fear the committee's existence could reduce the effectiveness of the consultation process—that is, an agency could take a hard line on its project and force the issue to be thrown to the committee. And, although the committee would be slanted toward environmental preservation with members from the present Administration, there is no telling what types might be on it in the future.—C.H.