

the path of scientific extinction as a result of exclusionary overspecialization.

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I was disturbed by Koshland's editorial accompanying the announcement of the "Molecule of the Year." He denigrates those who raise questions about what constitutes "progress" as people "who look into the mirror darkly." But his three examples of the imperfections his opponents see in the mirror are much more revealing of his mindset than they are a proof of the flaws in the arguments of those he takes as his opponents.

It is precisely because people *do* remember the romance of DDT, the romance of plastics, the romance of the auto and the open road, that they raise questions today about the equally romantic promotion of new technologies. Koshland's treatment of all such critics as if they wanted to freeze the status quo or return to some era in the past does not address the substantive questions that many such critics are attempting to raise.

In a democratic society, there should be room for open and honest debate about "progress." The readers of *Science* would be better served if the editor used the editorial resources at his disposal to better understand why millions of his fellow citizens "look into the mirror darkly."

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Poverty Among U.S. Children

In their study of poverty in America, Mary Jo Bane and David Ellwood (Articles, 8 Sept., p. 1047) lay much of the blame on prevailing socioeconomic trends. In so doing, however, they leave a more pressing question unanswered. Why should America fail its children in this way when the children of other much less wealthy nations fare so much better?

The reasons are undoubtedly complex, but a strong case can be made for the role of federal apathy. Housing is one example—in 1980, the Department of Housing and Urban Development was funded at \$32 billion; today that figure stands at just over \$7 billion (1). As a result there has been a dramatic decline in the construction of

homes for low- and middle-income Americans. In the state of Massachusetts, the federal government financed the construction of 15,000 units of affordable housing in 1979, but of only 1932 units in 1987 (2). The fastest growing segment of the real estate market in Massachusetts during this period was state-funded shelters for the homeless (up from 2 in 1982 to 122 in 1989) (3).

Housing aside, federal assistance to the poor has also stalled. Even proven, cost-effective programs such as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) remains disturbingly underfunded (WIC now serves only about 50% of those eligible) (4). It should be clear that concern alone will not prevent poverty. It will take federal action and a real commitment to the future of our nation's children.

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3. "FY 1989 budget narrative" (Department of Public Welfare, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1989).
4. U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, *U.S. Children and Their Families: Current Conditions and Recent Trends, 1989* (Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1989).

Shockley: A Scholar

It was disgraceful that *Science* gave publicity to the notion that the cause of William Shockley's views on race differences in cognitive performance was a car accident (Briefings, 5 Jan., p. 25). Irrespective of the source of the story, it was an ad hominem attack that should have had no place in the scientific enterprise. William Shockley was a serious scholar and deserved to be treated as such.

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Response: No criticism of Shockley was intended; the piece was a report of an unusual "defense" of Shockley by a prominent scientist.—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

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