

cause he has dared broach and expand upon a subject that has been taboo for intellectuals since phony science was used to justify the racist atrocities of World War II. He appears to be a man remarkably free of doubt—he takes a mildly condescending view of his critics and says the more he reads and hears the more convinced he is of the correctness of his thinking.

Critics say he has chosen to ignore voluminous literature that conflicts with or complicates the material he has chosen to support his theories. Many question the entire concept that it will ever be possible to quantify the relative contributions of genes and environment to mental attributes. Many say he is naive and are outraged at his claims that he is unbiased. Psychologist Leon Kamin at Princeton, for example, says Herrnstein has always been an “elitist.” Herrnstein’s reply is that Kamin is a “fervent Marxist” who “may have let Marxism get the better of his scientific judgment.”

The IQ test—which Herrnstein believes to be psychology’s “most telling accomplishment”—is now widely regarded as “culture-unfair.” Untrue, says Herrnstein. The tremendous “within-class variability” of test scores shows they are not culturally biased. Nor does he think the verbal parts, such as vocabulary testing, discriminate against children with intellectually impoverished environments. “The ability to distinguish between two similar words, such as ‘triumph’ and ‘victory,’ gets at something very deep,” he says.

Herrnstein doesn’t recommend universal IQ testing for children; indeed, he doesn’t know the IQ’s of his two sons. He says the tests are valuable as diagnostic tools, for comparison of “incomparabilities” (such as two college applicants from differing educational backgrounds), and for research.

It is not the function of scientists to pass moral judgment on their work, says Herrnstein—after all, “nature doesn’t give a crap about the character of a scientist. She has hidden her secrets where a creep could find them.” Should scientists have misgivings about working on the atom bomb, nerve gas, in vitro fertilization of human ova, cloning? No, says Herrnstein, just because we haven’t yet found a beneficial use for nerve gas doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be developed. “The crunch comes at the level of public policy,” and it is up to an “informed public” to make decisions on whether cloning,

for example, should be outlawed once proved possible.

Many people think the work of Herrnstein and others will directly influence public policy. A newly formed Committee on Racism at the University of Wisconsin recently issued a press release saying as much: “[I]f people support these hereditary theories, there’ll be an end to . . . all programs that assume if you improve the environment, you improve learning ability.” Frank Riessman, psychologist and professor of education at Queens College, says that the findings of people like Jensen and Coleman have pervaded federal government thinking on social programs and have provided rationales for their termination. Some programs have been ended because they were no good, but there is an equally strong feeling of “Why should we waste money on poor children when they

can’t learn anyway?” says Riessman.

Herrnstein says he doesn’t know what implications his work should have for public policy, but he does not believe it supplies a rationale for curtailing social programs. He points out that adherents of racism and oppression need no scientific rationale for their convictions.

Herrnstein says he is “utterly agnostic” on the question of whether or not there are innate intellectual differences among races. Ironically, he says, those who claim to fear that the information he has published will be abused are themselves guilty of abusing it. It particularly bothered him to see Alvin Poussaint, a black Harvard psychiatrist, write an article in the *Boston Globe* saying that Herrnstein’s pronouncements were “a threat to the survival of every black person in America.”

Brezhnev Feasts: Scientists Fast

While Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev and President Richard Nixon were alternately toasting each other and signing accords (see page 39), seven Soviet scientists who had had their applications to emigrate to Israel denied, went on a hunger strike lasting 14 days. In a statement designed to coincide with the publicity given to the summit meetings in the United States, the scientists said, “We are glad of East-West contact. . . . No less than other people, we desire a stable world; but we do not believe that in our time it can be achieved at the expense of anybody’s human rights.” Citing the problem of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union it concluded: “At the time the two world leaders sit down at the festival table, those who are victims of this selection shall begin the ninth day of our hunger strike.”

The scientists included physicists Mark Ya. Azbel, of the Landau Institute of Theoretical Physics; Moisei S. Gitterman, of the government Committee of Standards and the Physical-Technical Institute; Alexander V. Voronel, also with the Committee on Standards; and Vladimir L. Roginsky, associated with the State Committee for the Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy. The others were Viktor L. Brailovsky, a computer expert, and two mathematicians, Aleksandor L. Luntz and Anatoly S. Libgober. Midway through the strike Libgober, the youngest, was reported to have been given an exit visa.

The strike’s end coincided with Brezhnev’s departure from the United States. Before it was over, however, the fasting scientists disputed an issue that has come up previously in the case of Benjamin Levich, another of Russia’s most prominent scientists who has been denied an exit visa: whether previous employment in secret government installations is an actual or false excuse by the Soviet authorities for prohibiting scientists from emigrating. The *New York Times* reported on 22 June that the six senior scientists had worked at institutions considered “sensitive” by Soviet authorities.

In one of their frequent telephone conversations to the West, the fasting group denied that they had engaged in secret research or that it is a valid reason for the authorities’ denial of their exit visas. Since applying for visas, all had lost their jobs; but three of the physicists were reported as spending their time teaching—by telephone—graduate students in Israel.—D.S.