

Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Politics in the Classroom (cont.)

Political scientist Charles Murray of the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington, D.C. think tank, has joined the list of teachers in the United States and Canada who have been accused of conducting racist courses.

Murray, with help from Harvard psychologist Richard Herrnstein, has been giving a one-semester course on "Human Abilities and Public Policy" at the University of Denver. It reviews research on standardized ability tests and on the genetics of IQ, describes the relationship of individual differences in ability to occupational and educational achievement, and discusses how research may help supply "a framework for thinking about solutions" to social problems.

But some on the Denver campus felt that Murray had a more sinister agenda—particularly when Herrnstein, a *bête noir* to those who contend that ability tests are biased against blacks, arrived to talk about the history of psychological testing. A group of about 40 students and teachers, led by political scientist Alan

Gilbert, mobilized for a rally and demanded some of Herrnstein's lecture time to air their views.

Gilbert told *Science* that Murray and Herrnstein are promoting "essentially pseudo-scientific views about the connection of IQ and race as fact." He cites statements by Murray (which Murray confirms) to the effect that IQ differences between blacks and whites "may be" explained genetically; that there are "intractable" differences between the races in achievement; and that "in a color-blind society, blacks may



Susan Muniak

Charles Murray. *Getting fingers burned in race-IQ controversy.*

not be found in the same proportions [to their numbers] as whites" in the occupational hierarchy. Gilbert branded the course "an assault on minorities and women" that "in principle" ought to be canceled.

Murray responds that neither he nor Herrnstein has taken a stand on whether black-white differences are, in fact, genetic. He says "intractable" is not synonymous with genetic: persistent racial differences in achievement could stem from environmental factors that are exceedingly difficult to change.

These arguments won't satisfy critic Gilbert. But he says that in view of freedom-of-speech issues that have been raised recently by efforts to curb controversial teachers—most recently in the case of Berkeley anthropologist Vincent Sarich (*Science*, 25 January, p. 68)—he'd settle for having the course "opened up to more points of view."

New Round in Purloined Data Case

Scientific misconduct charges filed by microbiologist Jeffrey Williams at Michigan State University prompted a response from the university last month. The case began in 1988 when a doctoral student in Williams' lab made off with data and tissue samples—after she was dismissed—on which she had been working. Williams was unable to retrieve them and, he says, waited in vain for 18 months for the university to intervene (*Science*, 4 January, p. 23).

Now, in a reversal, university

Eternal Obfuscation...

Among the experts at the Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA) are those well versed in the bureaucratic double bind, to judge from a brief communication recently received by *Science*. It reads, in part:

"Some unclassified DNA reports contain information that falls in the category of militarily critical technical data (critical technology)....If your organization is not eligible to receive this data, you must fill out the enclosed [form] and forward to [DNA]...."

"Failure to complete this form will result in your organization not receiving any unclassified 'critical technology' documents, including documents originating in your organization."

officials have not only returned all the materials to Williams but are also considering looking into charges he filed against other faculty members. The allegations have not been made public, but they relate to Williams' claim that faculty members helped the student, Maie Elkassaby, find a publisher for an article based on the contested data.

MSU officials persuaded Elkassaby to surrender the goods last year, but they weren't all returned to Williams until January. MSU's legal staff was hoping to get Elkassaby to settle with the university first. Williams protested, saying MSU was, in effect, becoming an accomplice to misconduct.

In January, though, MSU vice president Percy Pierre informed Williams by letter that a special panel had concluded that there is indeed enough evidence to support a full-scale inquiry into the case. But meanwhile, says Williams, the university has asked him to withdraw the charge for the good of the community. He does not intend to do so and is pressing for action. Of the administration, he says: "They're in a hole and still digging."

Facilities Awards

It took 3 years, but 78 research institutions are finally about to get some of the money they've desperately needed to fix up their decaying

facilities. In 1988 Congress passed the Research Facilities Modernization Act, and last month the National Science Foundation announced the first

awards under that measure: \$39 million to universities and research institutions, with 14% targeted to institutions that have received relatively little R&D funding, including historically black schools. With matching funds, the total support available to the winners among 425 applicants will amount to about \$100 million.

BIG WINNERS IN FACILITIES AWARDS (IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS)

Institution	Amount	Facilities
DUKE UNIVERSITY	1,900	BIOLOGY
U. TENNESSEE (KNOXVILLE)	1,700	CHEMISTRY
CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY	1,600	MELLON INSTITUTE
STANFORD UNIVERSITY	1,500	CHEMISTRY/ENGINEERING
U. MISSOURI (COLUMBIA)	1,449	BIOCHEMISTRY
U. IDAHO	1,300	CHEMISTRY
U. ALABAMA	1,060	CHEMISTRY
HARVEY MUDD COLLEGE, CA	1,025	CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS