

models are needed to explain the multifarious sets of disparate data. Exclusively sociocultural and economic models will not do the job.

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References

1. R. J. Herrnstein and C. Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Free Press, New York, 1994).

The advisory group statement comes dangerously close to criticizing free inquiry itself. Scientists often find that the search for truth leads in directions that threaten social consensus. Those who would defend that consensus only betray the weakness of their position when they ignore new discoveries and attack, instead, men and their motives. If Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein are wrong, let us prove them so. Simply to dismiss them without examining their ideas is the most graceless way of admitting that they may very well be right.

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Publicizing the Value of Basic Research

Bravo, Arthur Kornberg (Editorial, 29 Sept., p. 1799) for telling it like it is! The current fad of supporting "strategic basic research" and "targeted basic research," accompanied by severe cuts in research, affects not only the biological, but all sciences across the board.

As scientists, we owe it to ourselves, and even more to the future generations of scientists (our scientific children and grandchildren), to keep the flame of science burning as brightly as we can, but there is one element of the story that should not be neglected. Past experience lets us predict with some confidence that a breakthrough in some field will be made in the next few years in some country that is "prepared" for it. Imagine the public outcry if another country were to secure the basic rights to a new discovery that revolutionizes communication technology, or biotechnology (cure for AIDS or cancer), because they have kept active basic research programs, while we have not.

The AAAS, as the umbrella scientific society in the United States, should take an increasingly active role in publicizing to the American public the future dangers in the long term from cutting our national investment in basic research. With enough (and continued) publicity, the downward trend might be stopped.

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Bullets and Silk in the Old West

The Perspective "Putting a new spin on spider silk" by David A. Tirrell (5 Jan., p. 39) concerning the structure of spider dragline silk points out that the properties of spider silk have been known for nearly a century. Considerable interest in the material has been generated by the demonstration that spider dragline silk is one of the strongest fibers known. However, the similarly remarkable properties of silkworm silk, in particular its resistance to rupture by bullets, have been known for more than a century in the United States. An early pub-

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