

PSYCHOLOGY

No Drop in Intelligence

► OUR civilization is not growing dumber, losing its intelligence, although the wealthy and better educated classes are having smaller families.

This assurance was given the British Association for the Advancement in Science in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England, by Dr. P. E. Vernon, psychologist for the British Admiralty.

Other psychologists backed up Dr. Vernon who took issue with the opinion of Sir Cyril Burt, of the University of London, that by the end of the century the proportion of superior children will be half that in 1920 and the proportion of the very dull will be more than doubled.

Although psychologists admit that the most intelligent are not passing on their gifts to the next generation because of their small families, still the children do not appear to be any dumber than their parents or grandparents.

Perhaps something is wrong with the I. Q. tests, Dr. Vernon suggested. Maybe they are influenced by the environment or the children get higher scores as they grow more used to being tested.

"There are great difficulties in proving the extent to which intelligence is inherited, either by pedigree, twin resemblance, or other investigations," he said.

Prof. L. S. Penrose, another psychologist, expressed doubt of the prediction of geneticists that the intelligence level will decline. "Genes for high intelligence are apparently being continually lost but this is probably an illusion," he declared.

Effects of slight changes in environment can easily surpass the effects of natural selection on human characters, he indicated. Also stable hereditary conditions can be produced by the intermarriage of differing kinds of people—a hybrid vigor—even in the

presence of the tendency of the intelligent and the stupid to marry others like them in intelligence.

Two surveys of the intelligence of Scottish children indicate that the youngsters of today are actually brighter, not duller, than their elders.

In 1947, a group intelligence test was given to all 11-year-old Scottish children. Results were compared with a similar survey of 11-year-olds in 1932. It was shown that the 1947 children are brighter, although the brightest children come from the smallest families.

Science News Letter, September 17, 1949

CHEMISTRY-ENTOMOLOGY

Silicone Greases Collect Germs Effectively

► BACTERIA, pollen grains, fungus spores and other airborne troublemakers can be more advantageously collected on the sticky surface of a silicone grease than on vaseline, agar or other "stickums" now employed, Drs. S. M. Pady and C. D. Kelly of McGill University, Montreal, point out in the journal, *SCIENCE* (Aug. 19).

Glass plates or other objects smeared with sticky substances have been in use for some years for capturing microscopic objects floating in the air, sometimes on the ground, often on airplanes at high altitudes. All the media hitherto used change consistency with temperature, the two Canadian scientists point out. At the very low temperatures encountered in high airplane flights some of them freeze, lose their stickiness, and become unable to capture anything.

The silicone greases, on the other hand, keep the same stickiness at deep sub-zero

temperatures that they have at summer warmth, and so will function as catchers under any circumstances. Moreover, they may if desired be sterilized by heat, still without changing the character of their surfaces.

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Goldenrod, suggested by some as the national flower because it is distinctively American, is condemned by others in an erroneous belief that it is a prime cause of hay-fever.

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