

Social Sciences Notes

ECONOMICS

Abundant Society Forecast

The United States has today the economic means to eliminate poverty without depriving other citizens of anything very important. The obstacles to doing so are not economic, but political, ideological and psychological, said Dr. Walter A. Weisskopf, chairman of economics at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

In a report to the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Dr. Weisskopf forecast a future "abundant society," in which goods, produced by robots, are so plentiful, consumption becomes a burden.

His view is purely speculative, he said, but if the current trend toward automation and cybernation continues unchanged, superabundance combined with unemployment may mean the end of the profit motive and the beginning of a guaranteed minimum income for everyone.

There is a fear, he said, that the ideal of abundance, once attained, will make the present economically-oriented life meaningless.

Americans will probably need a push in ridding themselves of their acquisitive goals, he said, but this must be done to avoid future disintegration and boredom.

Dr. Daniel P. Moynihan, former Assistant Secretary of Labor, appears to be one of those pushing. At a government hearing, he called for a national allowance for slum families, amounting to billions of dollars a year.

PSYCHOLOGY

Asthma Mothers Typed

The mother of an asthmatic child is likely to be the self-pitying type who feels deprived and unappreciated. She is anxious, has a weak sense of identity, cannot handle stress well and lacks somewhat in warmth, according to the latest description of her, published in the December Archives of General Psychiatry.

The "deprived" mother was considerably more common to group of 62 asthmatic children than she was to a comparable group of nonallergic children or those with hay fever. The description also tallied with one given by 14 clinicians—both psychiatrists and psychologists—who regularly deal with asthmatic children, reported four researchers from the University of California at Berkeley and the Children's Hospital in Oakland.

They pointed out, however, that the classification is not exclusive; asthma occurs in children with different types of mothers as well.

The asthma study follows the current trend toward developing a typology for different mental and psychosomatic illnesses. Mothers of schizophrenic children, for instance, have been tagged as either "helpless" (confused, vacillating and suggestible), "puritanical" (moralistic) or "Machiavellian" (cold, hostile and manipulative) none of which are common to asthma.

Most recently, ulcerative colitis in children was linked to repressed, restrictive families.

PUBLIC POLICY

Supreme Court Will Hear Race Case

The Supreme Court will rule on the constitutionality of Virginia's age-old antimiscegenation law which the state contends is defensible on grounds of legal precedent and scientific evidence (SN-12/3).

Richard Loving and his Negro wife Mildred were married in the District of Columbia and returned to Virginia, their original home, to live. They were convicted under the Virginia statute forbidding Negroes and whites to marry in Virginia or to marry elsewhere and move to Virginia.

The Lovings are challenging the law as an invasion of their right of privacy and freedom to marry as well as a violation of the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment.

DRUG ABUSE

Mescal Plant Lifted From Gardens

Someone has been stealing mescaline-producing cactus plants from the Royal Botanical Gardens in London. To prevent their further theft, the plants have been moved to a restricted area of the gardens.

But Britishers with a penchant for taking LSD-type "trips" can always get the cactus variety from one of several London florist shops, which will order the plant and promise delivery within a few days.

Something of the kind can also be done in this country. The peyote cactus—from which mescaline comes—can be bought from Southwest cactus growers, ostensibly only for horticultural purposes; the Food and Drug Administration does not control its sale.

One reason is that peyote, used by Indians as a rite in the Native American Church, has never spread far. It has an obnoxious taste and produces nausea, unless the mescaline is abstracted.

No action is being considered in England either. The problem is not yet big enough, according to a Scotland Yard drug spokesman.

But one cactus seller feels differently. Charles Gilbert, the only cacti exhibitor at the well-known Chelsea Flower Show, said if a customer asks for three or four of the plants he refuses to sell.

"I suspect the persons interests. Anyone who chews this plant can develop grievances that become murderous" he said.

Mescaline was made famous by writer Aldous Huxley, who wrote a book under its influence.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Phone Fears Fought

Rural British schools may soon be giving lessons in phone dialing to remedy the fear of the telephone, according to the Medical Research Council.

"You hear of villages where there have been accidents, but no one telephoned for help, for the only person who knows how to use the telephone is not there," one official said.