

Social Sciences Notes

CONTRACT POLICY

OEO Drops Secrecy Rules

The Office of Economic Opportunity, prodded by Congress, has revised its contracts with researchers to make clear that antipoverty research is not top secret.

Although its contracts have included a clause that prevents distribution without permission of "any information, oral or written, concerning the objectives, results, or conclusions" of any study under an OEO grant, the poverty warriors maintain they have never kept results secret.

Not good enough, replies Representative Henry S. Reuss (D-Wis.). Without a change in the language, "the public will believe that OEO permits its contractors to release only those facts it wants the public to know."

After a second prod from Reuss and consultations with the staff of his House Research and Technical Programs Subcommittee, OEO now agrees to state in its contracts that all contract results may be released by the contractor 60 days after delivery to OEO.

The previous language had been applied to some 88 research and evaluation grants totalling \$12,330,547 during 1965 and 1966.

CYBERNETICS

Russia Plunges into Cybernetics

The Soviet Union is plunging whole-heartedly into cybernetics, according to a recent study by Drs. Robert W. Brainard and William D. Hitt of the Columbus Laboratories of Battelle Memorial Institute.

But because of fundamental differences between the United States and the U.S.S.R., the researchers believe that creative breakthroughs in cybernetic theory are likely to be made in this country, while Russia concentrates on large-scale applications.

Its most ambitious project at the moment is to establish a mathematical model of the entire Soviet economy, then to plan and control it through a nation-wide network of computer centers. Eventually, said the Battelle researchers, economic control could pass from the Communist party to technicians. Another Soviet goal aims at using computers to codify laws and analyze their internal consistency. Work has already begun toward identifying the conditions that produce crime.

Similar moves are evident in medicine—with an attempt to automate diagnoses—in education—with programmed instruction and in public health.

But if the Soviets encounter the same basic obstacles in computer technology that U.S. scientists have met, they may find they have overestimated the mental powers of machines to analyze complex social conditions.

MILITARY PSYCHIATRY

Mental Breaks Low in Vietnam

Despite the tensions of guerrilla warfare, mental breaks are far less common among American soldiers in Vietnam than they were in either Korea or World War II.

Compared to the World War II rate—101 breakdowns out of 1,000 men, or the Korean rate—66 out of 1,000, the rate of psychiatric breaks in Vietnam is only 15 in 1,000.

Mobile psychiatric teams and a resident psychiatrist

for each division have helped keep the rate down. But also, soldiers do not have long and continuous forays into battle. They make sorties from relatively secure camps and return frequently for rest. In addition, their tours of duty are limited to a year.

Military psychiatrists, however, point to their preventive program for much of the explanation. Believing in the old adage that a man should get right back in the saddle, doctors treat their patients in the battle zone. With a combination of group therapy, modern drugs, and rest, they are returning two of every three patients to active duty, reported Medical World News, in its issue of January 27.

SOCIOLOGY

Ex-convicts over Mental Patients

Better an ex-convict than an ex-mental patient, if the views of 158 college students at the University of Oregon and the University of Missouri are any indication of popular opinion.

The students were forced to choose between the two in 30 different hypothetical situations such as: with a room to rent, whom would a woman less want to have as a roomer.

The ex-convict was seen as slightly more desirable than the discharged mental patient, reported Richard E. Lamy of the University of Missouri in Kansas City. The students shared a common frame of reference in their attitudes toward the ex-patient. In general he was considered unpredictable, a source of anxiety and less able than the convict to hold a steady job or the love of a woman.

Thus, the discharged mental patient finds his community "non-hostile, but unaccepting," said Lamy.

EDUCATION

Students Have Their Own Logic

Sitting at the feet of a master may still be the best way to learn. But an experiment led by the well-known inventor of Polaroid cameras, Dr. Edwin H. Land, suggests that the master does not even have to be present, just so long as students have free rein to question, back up and follow through material according to their own logic.

When a group of young teenage boys was given such an opportunity, they gained a grasp of science far above their school level and enjoyed the experience, reported Dr. Land and Stewart W. Wilson, a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The boys were told the lessons would come from a machine which they could interrupt with questions at any time. Actually an expert sat behind the machine and if the answer was not on tape, he gave it, unknown to the boys.

Dr. Land said he was amazed that each session lasted an average of two hours. "All our ordinary ideas about a 13-year-old's span of attention in listening to hard subjects are shaken."

The experiment also means that students want to structure knowledge in their own way. "They want to follow an idea for a while, until they are surfeited, so to speak, and then pick up another idea. They do not honor the logic with which centuries of work has structured a subject."