

help to determine intangible characteristics such as intelligence, the extent of the overlap may be much greater than may now be apparent.

These simple truths have a cruel meaning for those who would attempt to use a better understanding of racial differences as a basis for making social decisions. Enlightened societies have learned, sometimes painfully, that it is exceedingly unwise to base social policy on the assumption that some people are more equal than others in any way at all. In circumstances like these, it would be entirely proper that an enlightened government persuaded of the reality of some of the differences of which Professors Eysenck and Jensen have spoken in recent years would be impelled not to illiberal policies intended to accentuate the differences but in the opposite direction, possibly to the deliberate encouragement of miscegenation.

The moral for the signatories of the Jensen resolution is plain enough. They happen to be working in a field of science in which it is not permissible to think that scientists have done their duty when they have described the results of their work to their professional colleagues, and widely (and accurately) popularized them. It is also necessary, in these special circumstances, earnestly to ensure that the audience is clearly aware that the results are usually irrelevant to the management of society as it is at present. The dangers of misunderstanding are so many that a proper interpretation of the facts cannot possibly be left to chance. With this important reservation, unfortunately lacking from the declaration in the *American Psychologist*, the plea for openness is irresistible. Intellectual intolerance is in its way as evil as racial intolerance. But some of the signatories must mend their ways.

## Turning-point for BA?

ONE way or another, the annual meeting of the British Association at Leicester next week will determine whether this ancient and recently fuddy-duddy organization will be able to make a continuing claim on professional and public attention. For several years, the association has been struggling to avoid collapse through bankruptcy, and in the process has been too eager to compromise on issues of principle—the annual hand-out of £10,000 from what used to be the Ministry of Technology, now running out, was always likely to disappoint those who thought that the association could exert an important influence in persuading young men and women to turn their attention from pure science to technology. The chief consequence of this and other subventions was to postpone the energetic pruning of the association's office overheads, mercifully undertaken early in 1971 by the body known as the Committee of Review. With all these anxieties, however, the association has paid too little attention to the continuing redefinition of objectives which changing circumstances require. Only now, in the nick of time, has the association put forward a set of proposals for reorganization which promise to provide a framework within which it might hope indefinitely to prosper, intellectually as well as financially.

The General Committee of the association will be asked next week to approve a number of far-reaching proposals, one of which will have the effect of turning

the committee into a kind of electoral college, with responsibility for electing a much smaller council than the elephantine body which is at present responsible for making policy, but which is at once too large and too honorific to be effective. Although the electoral system now proposed is complicated by the need somehow to satisfy the sixteen sections of the association that they will be fairly represented on the new council, the fact that ordinary members of the association would, on the new proposals, have a say in choosing council members will by itself go a long way to ensure that the association does what the members want. The notion that the chairman of the council should be a paid officer of the association, the intellectual and executive head of the organization, is another step in the right direction. And for the next few years at least, there is a prospect that the government will indirectly provide a substantial subvention by means of a grant from the Royal Society.

What should the association try to do with the new lease on life that is in prospect? The annual meeting is certain to continue, for this appears to be what members want. The association will, however, have to work out ways of making the meeting more effective both as a vehicle for the clubby professional talk which does at least serve to bring active researchers and other scientifically inclined people together and as a means of conveying a vision of science and of its implications to the world at large. But an annual meeting is not enough to keep the association together, which is why the plans for carrying out special studies of important matters of public interest, and for holding less elaborate meetings on special topics, are widely to be welcomed. The need for some means by which matters of public concern, from the economics of the crusade against pollution of the environment to the realities of recent progress in biomedical science, should be studied carefully by a body which has the skill and independence necessary to make such work convincing. In short, the British Association is as much needed now as when it was created, nearly 140 years ago. The hope is that the meeting this week at Leicester will appreciate the importance as well as the magnitude of the challenge.

## 100 Years Ago



WE are glad to be able to record the addition to the Brighton Aquarium, of a specimen of Muller's Topknot (*Rhombus hirtus*.) It was netted off the Brighton coast last week. But one capture of this rare fish off the Sussex coast is recorded by Yarrell, but it is more frequently taken off the Cornish coast. The interesting event is also announced of the birth of a young cuttle-fish, which signalled its entrance into the world by an immediate discharge of the sepia fluid.

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