

IQ Tests As Instruments of Oppression-- From Immigration Quotas to Welfare

23

A Talk by DR. LEON KAMIN

Reprinted by the International Committee Against Racism (CAR)

On March 23, the Southern Regional Council sponsored a one-day symposium on the history of intelligence testing and its public policy implications. The principal presentation was made by Dr. Leon Kamin, chairman of the Department of Psychology at Princeton University.

During the morning session, Dr. Kamin presented findings of his extensive research into the original studies on which some American social scientists have based writings on the intractability of intelligence.

Dr. Kamin concluded that there is no valid evidence at all to support the heredity assumption. A transcript of this portion of his presentation was published in the May-June issue of SOUTH TODAY.

The following transcript is Dr. Kamin's afternoon presentation on the history of the use of testing in the United States to support repressive public policy.

The pioneers of the intelligence testing movement in the United States were three men who, around 1910, imported from France and translated the first so-called intelligence test.

This test had been constructed by the French psychologist Alfred Binet, interestingly enough, for the purpose of detecting learning disabilities among school children, and not for the purpose of measuring a person's fixed intelligence quotient.

The three American pioneers were Lewis Terman at Stanford, Henry Goddard at Princeton, and Robert Yerkes at Harvard.

These men had some pretty well defined ideas about society and about race. Whether or not these ideas influenced their interpretations of intelligence test scores I will leave for you to decide. I'd like to read a few quotations from their writings.

Terman, in his book published in 1916 which presented the famous Stanford-Binet test, described the poor test scores of a couple of Portuguese children and then wrote the following: "The dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stocks from which they come. The fact that one meets this type with such extraordinary frequency among Indians, Mexicans and Negroes suggests quite forcibly the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew and by experimental methods."

The writer predicts that when this is done "there will be discovered enormously significant racial differences in general intelligence, differences which cannot be wiped out by any scheme of mental culture. Children of this group should be segregated in special classes. They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers. There is no possibility at present of convincing society that they should not be allowed to reproduce. They constitute a grave menace because of their unusually prolific breeding." This, from the founder of the American intelligence testing movement.

"The Menace of Feeble-Mindedness"

The next year writing under the heading "The Menace of Feeble-Mindedness," Prof. Terman wrote, "Only recently have we begun to recognize how serious a menace it is to the social, economic and moral welfare of the state. It is responsible

for the majority of cases of chronic and semi-chronic pauperism. The feeble-minded continue to multiply. Organized charities often contribute to the survival of individuals who would otherwise not be able to live and reproduce. When charity organizations help the feeble-minded float along in the social and industrial world and to produce and rear children after their kind, a doubtful service is rendered. A little psychological research would aid the united charities of any city to direct their expenditures into more profitable channels. If we would preserve our state for a class of people worthy to possess it, we must prevent as far as possible the propagation of mental degenerates. We must curtail the increasing spawn of degeneracy." You will detect perhaps a certain social and political ideology there.

Henry Goddard was invited to Princeton University in 1920 to give lectures. He had devised his own version of the Binet scale, and this is what he told the Princeton audience in 1920, after first explaining that this marvelous new test measured genetically determined intelligence. "We may perhaps be permitted to apply the principle to another problem that looms up rather large at the present time, namely socialism. Especially its extreme form of Bolshevism. Most of the arguments used by the more intelligent members of these groups are fallacious, because they ignore the mental levels [meaning IQ]. These men in their ultra humane attitudes, their desire to be fair to the workman, maintain that the great inequalities of social life are wrong and unjust.

"For example, here is a man who says, 'I am wearing \$12 shoes, there is a laborer who is wearing \$3 shoes. Why should I spend \$12 while he could only afford \$3? I live in a home that is artistically decorated—carpets, high priced furniture, expensive pictures, etc., and the laborer lives in a hovel. As we have said the argument is fallacious. The fact is, that workman may have a 10 year intelligence while you have a 20. To demand for him such a home as you enjoy is as absurd as it would be to insist that every laborer receive a graduate fellowship. How can there be such a thing as social equality, with this wide range of mental capacity?"

"As for an equal distribution of the wealth of the world, that is equally absurd. The man with intelligence has spent his money wisely and saved until he has enough to provide for his needs in case of sickness, while a man of low intelligence, no matter how much money he would have earned, would have spent much of it foolishly and would never have anything ahead. It is said that during the past year the coal miners in certain parts of the country have earned more money than the coal operators. Yet today when the mines shut down for a time, those people are the first to suffer. They did not save anything, although their whole life has taught them that mining is an irregular thing, and that when they were having plenty of work, they should save against the days when they do not have work."

But low IQ coal miners, according to Prof. Goddard, don't have enough intelligence to salt away all that extra money they're making, etc. You may detect a similarity between Prof. Goddard's ideol-

ogy and Prof. Terman's.

Prof. Terman should not have been so pessimistic as he was about the possibility of convincing society that those with low IQ scores should not reproduce. Over about a 10-year period about 35 states passed compulsory sterilization laws, applied only to people with the misfortune to end up in state-supported institutions.

Robert Yerkes at Harvard entered into a small argument with Terman. Terman had pointed out that the virtue of the test was that it provided a hard scientific number which enabled one to decide who was and who wasn't feeble-minded. Well, Yerkes said no, the test score certainly should be respected but, "never should a diagnosis of feeble-mindedness be made on the IQ alone. We must inquire further into the subject's economic history. What is his occupation and his pay? We must learn what we can about his immediate family. What is the economic status and occupation of the parents? When all this information has been collected, the psychologist may be of great value in getting the subject into the most suitable place in society." If his IQ was low enough, that suitable place was a public institution, where he might be sterilized.

History of Immigration Laws

I think the first immediate major practical effect of intelligence testing was in an area which most people don't know about. I didn't know about it until a year ago. It turns out that intelligence tests had a great deal to do with the framing of the immigration laws of the United States. And I would like to run through briefly some of the history of that period.

As early as 1912 Prof. Goddard, the Princeton coal miner speaker, was invited to Ellis Island by the United States Public Health Service and invited to apply the new science of intelligence testing to immigrants from Europe. Goddard reported in a scientific paper that he had given the intelligence test to a representative sample of European immigrants. He discovered that 83 percent of the Jews trying to enter the U. S. were feeble-minded, that 80 percent of the Hungarians were feeble-minded, that 79 percent of the Italians were feeble-minded, and that 87 percent of the Russians were feeble-minded. Science and psychology score again. And he wrote in 1917, "The number of aliens deported because of feeble-mindedness increased approximately 350 percent in 1913 and 57 percent in 1914 over what it had been. This was due chiefly to the efforts of the physicians who were inspired by the belief that mental tests could be used for the detection of feeble-minded aliens."

Until 1875 there were no federal immigration laws, whatsoever. Anybody who wanted to come. In 1875, the first federal law was passed. It did not limit the number of immigrants, but it did exclude certain classes of individuals. And the first exclusion in 1875 consisted of three types of people—coolies, convicts and foreign prostitutes. In 1882, lunatics and idiots were added, and as one goes through the years more classes. So by 1903 persons who had had two or more attacks of insanity at any time previously were added. The point is that up until the outbreak of World War I, there was in principle unlimited immigration. Certain defective classes of individuals were ex-

cluded, but the total number of immigrants was still wide open.

Then one sees the first straw in the wind. Terman, Yerkes and Goddard and many of the leading biologists and psychologists were members of an organization called the Eugenics Research Association. They were concerned with improving human breeding stock by cutting off the defective germ plasm of the feeble-minded, etc. The editor of their Journal, *The Eugenical News*, was a biologist named Dr. Harry Laughlin. As early as 1917 he wrote the following under the heading "The New Immigration Law": "Recently the science of psychology has developed to a high stage of precision that branch of its general subject devoted to the testing of individuals for natural excellence in mental and temperamental qualities. When the knowledge of the existence of this science becomes generally known in Congress, that body will then be expected to apply the direct and logical test for the qualities which we seek to measure in immigrants."

World War I and IQ Testing

The small cloud on the horizon is no larger than a man's fist, but it's going to grow and grow. Later in 1917, the U. S. entered world war I and for the first time in history, literally millions of individuals were subjected to intelligence testing. The head of the intelligence testing program in the Army was now Col. Robert M. Yerkes.

In 1918 a small distinguished group of psychologists and biologists from the eastern seaboard founded something called the Galton Society which met in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City once a month. It consisted at no one time of more than 25 distinguished scientists. They provided, as a free service, to the government and to private organizations all kinds of helpful hints about eugenical practices.

In 1920 there was an enormous influx of experimental psychologists into the Eugenics Research Association. All at the same time in a given year, a tremendous number of distinguished experimental psychologists and biologists in the country joined the Eugenics Research Association. The secretary of the association, Dr. Laughlin, got a new job. He remained secretary of the Association but he was also appointed "Expert Eugenics Agent" for the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the U. S. Congress.

In 1921, the National Academy of Science published, under the editorship of Col. Yerkes, an enormous volume which contained within it the summary of all the intelligence testing data gathered on draftees in World War I.

Most people know that that volume demonstrated massively for the first time that blacks scored much lower than whites in intelligence tests. But what almost nobody seems to know was that the immediate practical application of this data was not to a black-white question but to the question of immigration. There was a special chapter in this volume edited by Yerkes, which presented the data on the intelligence test scores of draftees who were immigrants and who had been born in different European countries.

Originally published in "South Today", July, 1973, 4, 9. Reprinted by C.A.R., Box 904, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202

Profound Economic Conflicts, Profound Racism Behind Misuse of IQ Tests

The U. S. Army test scores could be classified in terms of A, B, C, D, E. If you are really stupid you are E. What that shows is that the average intelligence of draftees who are immigrants from different European countries differ. It turns out that immigrants coming from England, Holland, Denmark, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, etc. seem quite bright. The Russians, the Italians and the Poles are all just plain stupid. The Poles did not score higher than the blacks. Now in describing this set of interesting data, the writer used the value-free statement, "The Slavic and Latin countries stand low."

"The Passing of the Great Race"

Madison Grant, president of the Galton Society had published a very influential racist book called *The Passing of the Great Race*, in which he divided all of Europe into Mediterranean, Alpine and Nordic stocks. Nordics were later rechristened Aryan by other eugenic authorities. In any event, Grant had made the observation that all that was good, beautiful and true in culture and civilization had come to us from the Nordics and nothing much from the Latin and Slavic countries. Here we see proof that the intelligence of the Latins and Slavs is indeed visibly dull.

In 1922, Col. Yerkes had a civilian job in the National Research Council in Washington. The National Research Council under his leadership set up a special commission of scientists called the Commission for the Scientific Study of Problems of Human Migration. The National Research Council began to support research relevant to problems of human migration. The first research it supported was that of Prof. Carl Brigham, at that time an assistant professor at Princeton University in the psychology department. In 1923, the Princeton University Press published Brigham's work entitled, *A Study of American Intelligence*. What Brigham did was take the Army immigrant data and demonstrate that the longer an immigrant had been in the United States, the higher was his IQ.

We must assume that he assumed the test measured native intelligence. The psychologists had built it to measure native intelligence. How can it be that immigrants that have been in this country a long time are so much brighter than immigrants who haven't been in this country a long time? Prof. Brigham concluded that this had nothing to do with knowing the English language or knowing American culture—no. The immigrants, during the early 1900s, had arrived from northwestern Europe, full of Nordic blood, whereas the immigrants who arrived from 1913 to 1918 were from southeastern Europe and consisted of Poles, Italians, Russians, Jews, etc., immigrants with very little Nordic blood.

From this Prof. Brigham concluded that there was a clear parallel between the proportion of Nordic blood and the intelligence of the immigrants. That left a certain policy recommendation. Let me read to you the concluding passages of Prof. Brigham's book. (The forward in this book was written by Col. Yerkes.) Brigham says, "We must face a possibility of racial admixture here that is infinitely worse than that faced by any European country today. For we are incorporating the Negro into our racial stock, while all

of Europe is comparatively free from this taint."

The idea was that the lower classes breed too much and the upper classes don't breed enough. So, since intelligence is inherited, over the years the average intelligence is going to sink and sink until eventually it gets below zero. Here in the U. S. it's going to be worse, because not only do we have stupid immigrants, but we have stupid blacks as well.

Brigham wrote, "But the decline of American intelligence will be more rapid than the decline of intelligence of European national groups, owing to the presence here of a Negro. The steps that should be taken must of course be dictated by science and not by political expedience. Immigration should not only be restricted but highly selective. And the revision of the immigration and naturalization laws will only afford a slight relief from our present difficulties. The really important steps are those looking toward the prevention of the continued propagation of the defective strains in the present population."

For those of you who missed the point, Prof. Brigham advocated the compulsory sterilization of the "defective." For those who want to know what happened to Prof. Brigham, he went on to a job as secretary to the College Entrance Examination Board. Also the Scholastic Aptitude Test was devised by Prof. Brigham. His book was not without influence.

Congressional Hearings

In 1923, the Eugenics Research Association elected as its chairman a non-scientist. That layman was the Hon. Albert Johnson, chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. The committee began to have hearings. I have read through the *Congressional Records* and hearing testimony in some detail. I'll just read a couple of excerpts. Dr. Arthur Sweeney testifying before the committee in 1923, said, "We have been overrun by a horde of the unfit. We've had no adequate means of determining who are the unfit. While we can measure objectively the physical qualifications of the immigrants, we have had no yardstick with which to perform an accurate estimate of the intellectual side. Psychological tests in the Army have furnished us with the necessary yardstick. Immigration from eastern and southern Europe is most undesirable. We can gauge the desirability of immigrants by the relative proportion of those in the A and B classes. We strenuously object to the immigration from Italy, Russia, Poland, Greece, and Turkey. The Slavic and Latin countries show a marked contrast in intelligence with the western and

The Committee Against Racism is active in opposing racism in schools, colleges, and communities in the U.S. and Canada. For more copies of this article or more information about CAR, please write to CAR, P.O. Box 904, Brooklyn, New York 11202

northern European group. From this source the stream of intelligent citizenship is polluted. Who are the unfit? The groups at the lower end of the psychological scale."

Francis Kinnicutt, testifying before a Senate Committee on Immigration and Naturalization in 1923, said, "The large proportion of this immigration from southern and eastern Europe comes from Poland or from Russia. The immigration from the last two countries consists largely of the Hebrew elements. Some of their labor unions are among the most radical in the whole country. The recent Army tests show that all three of these classes ranked far below the average in intelligence." Here, he was referring to Brigham's book, *A Study of American Intelligence*. Col. Yerkes also vouches for Brigham's book and speaks in the highest terms of the author, who, by this time, is assistant professor of psychology at Princeton University.

Also testifying at these hearings was Madison Grant, who said, "The country at large has been greatly impressed by the results of the Army intelligence tests, carefully analyzed by Yerkes and Brigham. The experts who have analyzed the statistics and who have tested the tests believe that the tests give as accurate a measurement of intelligence as is possible at the present time. The questions were selected with a view to measuring innate ability. Experts have told us that had mental testing been in operation, over 6 million Americans now living in this country, free to become the fathers and mothers of future Americans, would never have been admitted."

New Restrictive Immigration Laws

In 1921, as the result of an intense national debate, temporary legislation limiting the number of immigrants was passed by Congress for the first time. According to the law, the number of immigrants allowed into the United States from any European country depended upon the number of people from that European country already residing in the U. S. This temporary law assigned to each European country an immigration quota based on three percent of its population residing in the U. S. Even though the temporary law passed in 1921, the population statistics were based on the 1910 Census.

Just so that you don't miss the point, the permanent law which was passed in 1924 reduced the percentage of the residing European population to two percent, based not on the 1910 census, certainly not on the 1920 census, not on the 1900 census but on the 1890 census, when all the immigrant blood was Nordic. If one reads the congressional debate, nobody fooled anybody. The use of the 1890 census was explicitly stated to be an exclusionary racist policy—to keep the inferior blood from southeastern Europe away from our fair shores, while making it possible for northwestern Europeans to immigrate. This was largely rationalized on the basis that the tests of innate ability developed by psychologists had clearly demonstrated, in study after study, that Italians, Poles, Russians and Jews scored 25 or 30 IQ points lower than the Nordics from northwestern Europe.

You can't appreciate the full flavor of the "scientific findings" without reading the literature. Prof. Hirsch conducted a study in 1926, supported by the National Research Council, and published in the professional journal, *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, that raised the question of

the intelligence of children of southeastern European immigrants whose children had been born in this country had gone to schools in this country. If the stupidity is really genetic, then the children of Polish, Russian and Italian immigrants should be stupid as well.

Needless to say, Prof. Hirsch discovered that indeed the children of Russian, Polish, Italian immigrants were also stupid. Let me read to you from his study. Remember this is in a professional, psychological journal. "The immigration law passed by Congress is one of most hopeful signs. That part of the law which has to do with non-quota immigrants should be modified." (You see, there was no quota for immigrants either from Canada or from Mexico.) "All mental testing upon children of Spanish Mexican descent has shown that the average intelligence of this group is even lower than the average intelligence of Portuguese and Negro children in this study. Yet Mexicans are flowing into the country. In our immigration from Canada, we are getting the less intelligent, working-class people. The increase in the number of French Canadian group in our data approaches the level of the average Negro intelligence. I have seen gatherings of the foreign born in which narrow and sloping foreheads were the rule. In every face there was something wrong. Lips thick, mouth coarse, chin poorly formed, sugar loaf heads, goose-bill noses. . . . Immigration officials report vast trouble in extracting the truth from certain brunette nationalities."

I think what happened is fairly summarized in the presidential address of Frank Babbott to the Eugenics Research Association in 1927. By that time the battle was over and the national origin quotas had been passed. Speaking to the biologists and psychologists in the Association, Babbott said the following: "Eugenics has made its strongest appeal to me by its influence on immigration. This is an indirect result of eugenics, but it comes as a natural development of research on the part of people like yourselves. It is possible that restriction of immigration would have come without the aid of our society, but I doubt if it would have come so soon or so permanently."

Today's Data — "Absurd"

The major domestic issue facing the country in the early 1920s was the issue of immigration. It involved profound economic conflicts and profound racism. The major issue facing the country today, our politicians tell us, is "the great welfare mess," which again involves major economic conflict and profound racism. There was no shortage of scientific biologists and psychologists in 1920 prepared to act as teachers to the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. I'm afraid there will be no shortage of biologists, psychologists and others prepared to act as teachers today.

The data which such teachers are now presenting to policymakers, I think, is no more valid than the data presented by their scientific predecessors of the 1920s on the differences in innate intelligence among the racial stocks of Europe.

That data, as all would agree today, was absurd. It had nothing to do with "innate intelligence." In my opinion, today's data will look just as absurd in 50 years.