

## THE SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (Originally published September 1976)

Social scientists and their related associates continue to speak authoritatively and promote their nostrums for improving mankind with complete disregard to their miserable track record over the last fifty years. Under their guidance we seem to have progressed more toward social disaster than toward enlightenment. In almost every field, health, welfare, education, government reform, employment and economics, their remedies have been not only astronomically expensive but have worsened or failed to alter whatever it was they set out to improve.

On television the other night, a young PhD from our local college promoted his view that smoking should be banned in all public places by government order. His reason was not that he didn't like the smell of smoke or that it made his eyes smart, but that the public should be protected from inhaling an air pollutant that is detrimental to its health. His scientific training in psychology apparently qualified him to speak with authority on the subject. Well, as far as we know, there is not one bit of substantiated scientific evidence that non-smokers who breathe in other peoples' smoke are in danger from anything other than their own delusions or personal allergies. One could make just as "scientific" a case for the prohibiting of wearing ladies' perfume or men's aftershave lotions in public places.

Most of the social science claptrap seems to come from the gullible student followers or inexperienced young academics who teach the disciplines. The old hands at the game are not so naive. This was brought out quite effectively in a symposium "Social Science: The Public Disenchantment," which appeared in the summer issue of the quarterly *American Scholar*.

Nine nationally prominent authorities, most of them department heads of sociology, economics or government in our leading universities, agreed that the present loss of prestige and public disenchantment was brought upon their disciplines by the social scientists themselves. During their glowing years in the 1960s, they began to consider themselves "high priests in the new church of knowledge." They knew all the answers and they promised more than they could deliver; their arrogance and their unwillingness to suffer any evidence, which disagreed with their fixed preconceptions have contributed mightily to their low regard in the eyes of the public.

Daniel P. Monahan, professor of government at Harvard, noted: "The 1960s were a period during which 'social science' prescriptions for social policy had much currency, and the style grew steadily more debased. In time the most trivial assertions of upper-

class petulance or lower class anger were likely to be received with respect, even awe." The progressive social tenets soon became "over assertive and under examined. Things were promised that could not be delivered."

Thomas Sowell, professor of economics at UCLA, wonders why it took so long for the public to become disenchanted with "those intellectuals pretentious enough to call themselves 'social scientists,'" particularly after all the years of "extravagant promises, disastrous results, and trendy, self-indulgent gobbledygook." In his criticism he feels the social scientists "'Know a thousand things for which there is no real evidence, and against which there is an ever-growing mass of ignored facts.'" Examples of some things "we know" are:

that segregated schools are unequal,  
that capital punishment has no effect on the murder rate,  
that women are widespread victims of employer discrimination,  
that minorities can advance through political activism.

None of these "scientific" facts are provable according to Dr. Sowell.

In evidence, he cites that the best and most careful statistical study on capital punishment (by Gordon Tullock): ". . . indicates several murders prevented for every execution. This study has been met with resounding silence." He continues: "This illustrates both the social and political power of 'social science' and its intellectual and moral weakness. Although it proclaims itself a 'science,' it has in fact become a doctrinal orthodoxy, anxious to snuff out heresy by whatever means are necessary, including passing over it in magisterial silence, for fear of 'legitimizing' the 'wrong' kind of ideas."

We can only add that if the high gurus of social science can criticize and look so contemptuously on their fellow intellectuals, it should be time that their underlings begin to mature a little and examine their own beliefs and prejudices. The average man will often make a mistake, and may even make the same mistake again, but he will seldom persist after falling on his face more than once. The social sciences have had almost fifty years now to prove themselves, and with hundreds of mistakes admitted, they persist in their same efforts, even though there are no significant results to show. Unfortunately, social scientists never die nor even fade away; they continue to multiply like rabbits.