

SOCIETY*Contrary Views
of Crime*

"Thinking About 'Thinking About Crime'" by James Q. Wilson; "Crime, Punishment, and Deterrence" by Ernest van den Haag; "The Conservative New Criminology" by Lynn A. Curtis; "Crime and Conventional Wisdom" by Isidore Silver—in *Society* (Mar.-Apr. 1977), Box A, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

Baffled by the steadily rising U.S. crime rate, many Americans have begun to heed the "new classicist" criminologists, who hold that "deterrence" is a workable approach to reducing crime.

Two of these "new classicists," Wilson, a Harvard professor of government, and van den Haag, an NYU social philosopher, contend that the liberal, "social scientific" approach is bankrupt; that the "root causes" of crime are too complex and controversial to serve as a basis for countermeasures; that crime stems from individual human weakness, not deficiencies in society; and that criminal justice agencies, especially the courts, should promptly remove convicted offenders from society. Above all, these two writers believe that the threat of punishment will influence criminal behavior. The United States has more crime than Britain, Japan, or Italy. "Is it coincidence," asks van den Haag, "that the severity of our punishment is lower?"

A contrary view comes from Curtis, director of the National Alternative Inner City Futures Project, who argues that "retributive justice" (punishment) should not be stressed at the expense of "distributive justice" (general political and social reform). Social and economic barriers, he says have greater influence on spawning crime than do innate personal qualities. He criticizes the federal belief that more money, men, and crime-fighting equipment will do the job. CUNY historian Silver worries that the new classicists ignore the potential danger of rigid "deterrence" used as a tool of oppression. Innocent citizens, he observes, could become victims of such harsh prescriptions as mandatory prison sentences and reduced discretionary powers for parole boards.

*Detecting
Ovulation*

"Birth Control Goes Back to Nature" by Melanie Marcus, in *Harvard* (May-June 1977), 1341 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Catholic welfare groups, among others, have become interested in a possible new alternative to the birth control pill, the IUD, and other contraceptive devices, reports *Harvard* staff writer Marcus.

Dr. Harold J. Kosasky, clinical instructor in obstetrics and gynecology at Harvard Medical School, working with M.I.T. biomedical engineer Louis E. Kopito, has developed an "Ovutimer," capable of pinpointing the ovulation period—the fertile time—in a women's men-

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strual cycle. The key is an accurate measure of the viscosity (resistance of flow) of cervical mucus, which decreases for four days prior to ovulation and then increases. Kosasky has accurately predicted ovulation—or the lack of it—in over 2,200 tests on 100 women.

The Ovutimer's simple consumer version will utilize a weighted stand about the size of a cigarette pack. The woman samples her mucus on a probe covered by a grooved plastic plate. She places the plate against another plate mounted on the stand. If the two plates stick together when the stand is turned over, the mucus is safely thick and impenetrable by sperm. A normal woman would need to test herself four times a month; once she has detected her own ovulation, she can look forward to three weeks of protection. The device will be tested by 2,000 American women and could be available next year.

Blacks, Immigrants, and IQ Tests

"New Light on Black IQ" by Thomas Sowell, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Mar. 27, 1977), 229 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Controversial UCLA psychologist Arthur Jensen asserted in 1969 that (1) the average IQ of blacks is 15 points below that of fully-assimilated minorities; (2) black performance on tests is lowest when dealing with abstract material; (3) 80 percent of human intelligence is fixed forever at conception; and (4) the struggle to promote equal opportunity through education is therefore doomed to failure.

But Sowell, an economist at the Center for Advanced Study at Stanford, finds current patterns of black IQs "encouraging." Analyzing U.S. Army mental tests and some 70,000 elementary school transcripts, he finds that during World War I the IQs of European and Asian immigrants were nearly identical to black IQs today. Acculturation, education, and upward mobility closed the gap. Sowell concludes that, thanks to social changes of the past two decades, these factors are now beginning to influence the IQs of disadvantaged minority groups.

Soon after their arrival in America, Jews, Poles, Italians, Chinese, and Japanese had lower than average IQs (in the 80s and occasionally 70s), observes Sowell. But during the past 50 years, the average IQ of Polish- and Italian-Americans has gone up 20 to 25 points—a total exceeding the current gap between blacks and whites. Virtually all immigrant groups now have IQs at or above the national average.

As for Jensen's view that blacks have more difficulty on tests dealing with abstract material (i.e., material not dependent on "cultural information"), Sowell explains that similar results were found for white children in isolated mountain communities, for rural working-class children in England, and for Chinese-Americans during their early years in this country. Chinese-Americans now do best on abstract portions of standardized tests and figure prominently among the nation's Nobel Prize-winning scientists and mathematicians.