

Experts Reject Plan of Ex-Nixon Doctor for Tests on

Children to Find Potential Criminality

By JACK ROSENTHAL

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WASHINGTON, April 10—Three professional organizations denounced today a proposal, which has won President Nixon's personal interest, to predict potential criminality by giving psychological tests to every 6, 7, and 8 year old child.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, and sociologists used uncharacteristically blunt terms like "ridiculous," "absurd and ignorant," and "no support whatsoever" to describe the plan. It was proposed to the President last winter by Dr. Arnold Hutschnecker, a former personal physician to Mr. Nixon.

In a 1,600-word memorandum Dr. Hutschnecker proposed use of techniques like the Rorschach ink-blot test to identify children "who have violent and homicidal tendencies." He recommended special camps for severely disturbed, hard-core adolescents.

Comment Declined

The proposal was forwarded to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare with the statement that "the President asks your opinion as to the advisability of setting up

pilot projects embodying some of these approaches.

There are 12,572,000 children aged 6, 7, and 8 in the country.

An H.E.W. spokesman today declined any comment, but he said that a response to the House had been drafted but not yet sent. Other major health professionals in the department had responded to the proposal "emphatically in the negative."

Public criticism today took essentially two forms — challenges of Dr. Hutschnecker's credentials and descriptions of the impossibility of conducting reliable psychological tests of potential criminality.

Dr. Hutschnecker treated then-Vice President Nixon in the nineteen-fifties while he

practiced internal medicine in New York. Subsequently, he turned to psycho-somatic medicine in which he now specializes.

He is not certified as a medical specialist in psychiatry. Dr. Walter Rector, medical director of the American Psychiatric Association, said today: "Not to the best of our knowledge, does his proposal have any support whatsoever within the profession of psychiatry." Dr. Barton said:

Dr. Kenneth B. Wolfe, speaking for the American Psychological Association, said: "Dr. Hutschnecker shows a complete lack of understanding as to what psychological tests can or cannot do or even what they were meant to do."

The error range for even the best of tests could reach 50 per cent, he said. "The damage to the child and the family of erroneous classification is not possible to estimate."

Dr. Edmund H. Volkart, chief executive of the American Sociological Association, appearing with Dr. Bartlett at a news conference, said social environment, not personality, is the principal cause of difficulty.

"The notion that anyone knows what the criminal mind is in a 6-year-old is absurd."

"Deviancy doesn't necessarily mean crime or delinquency. It can also mean some damn fresh new ideas about the world

Other refs:

- 7 May 70, SFChronicle, this file
- 2 Oct 70, NYTimes, this file
- 29 Jul 72, New Orleans States-Item, filed Nixon
- 4 Jul 73, New York Times, filed Watergate
- ~~2 Dec 73, NYTimes, filed Nixon~~
- 20 NOV 73 WXPOST
- 9 NOV 73, SEEXAMINOR, THIS FILE
- 1, 2 DEC 73 SFCHRONICLE, CHARLES MURPHY, THIS FILE

Advertised in NYTimes 14 Nov 74:

The Drive for Power, by Arnold A. Hutschnecker, M.D. M. Evans and Company, Inc. \$7.95

These tests can't distinguish. If Michelangelo had been tested at age 7, they'd probably have killed him."

Another news conference participant assailed the special camps suggested by Dr. Hutschnecker. "That smacks of a Dick Tracy, goody-baddy image." "There are some treatment methods which have been successful. But even they are worthless if the treated child is then reintroduced to the same degenerated environment."

Dr. Hutschnecker's memorandum to the President was a critique of the work of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. A principal conclusion of the commission was the

need for reforming the social environment.

"No doubt there is a desperate need for the urban reconstruction," the memorandum said. "But I would suggest another, direct, immediate and I believe effective way of tackling the problem of its very origin, by focusing on the criminal mind of the child."

"The Government should have mass testing on all 6-to-8-year-old children to help detect the children who have violent and homicidal tendencies. Corrective treatment could begin at that time."

He called for day-care centers, after-school centers for older children, and guidance counseling for potential delin-

quents.

"For the severely disturbed, the young hard-core criminal, there may be a need to establish camps with group activities under the guidance of counselors, under the supervision of psychologists, who have empathy (most important) but also firmness and who can earn the respect of "difficult" adolescents."

Dr. Claude Jackson Bartlett, a spokesman at the psychological association conference today, said the proposal could not be taken seriously. But even if discarded quickly, he said, "I'm concerned that the public, in reaction to this, will turn off on all the legitimate research going on in this area."

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1 FEB 73
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