# Martin

### Scientific racism risky



The shortcomings of the supposedly "free" press were revealed by its mishandling of Philippe Rushton's "evolutionary theory."

His racist theory, which rated Orientals as first, whites as second, and blacks as third on the evolutionary scale, only got the publicity it did because of the timing of its recent presentation.

Racism is an ugly word and an ugly concept. Lately, it has been topical. Incidents like schoolyard clashes and allegations of racially motivated police violence have been dominating the news over the last month or so.

The fact that racism exists in Canada comes as no surprise. One only has to look at our attitudes towards native Canadians. The fact that racist behavior against blacks occurs is news, because it goes against our national self-conception as an accepting, tolerant and egalitarian society.

For the most part, the media has dealt with these incidents in an even-handed fashion. Spokesmen of all parties concerned have been given opportunities to voice their concerns.

While there is always the danger of "copy-cat" behavior, it is important that racist attitudes be exposed for the twisted distortions of reality that they represent. It is hoped that cooler heads will prevail, and that the frustration people feel about this issue is alleviated by discussion and, if necessary, action.

On the other hand, the media shouldn't have touched Rushton's "theory" with a ten-foot pole. It is generally ill-equipped to deal with academic debate, and tends to accord academics or "experts" with an uncritical respect that is not always deserved. As a result, we were exposed to a very one-sided argument. Finally, the media failed to raise some very important questions.

Because Rushton is an academic, his "theory" carries a lot more weight than, say, those of a Jim Keegstra or a Terry Long. This is not to say he's right, but just that he has earned more credibility. One only has to take a single university course to realize that the authority and validity of any academic can and should be challenged.

The media has no interest in publishing reasoned debate. It sells a lot more advertising or newspapers if extreme views are featured. Thorough and reasoned debate is left to the academic journals. This is why we don't hear about research that indicates the opposite of Rushton's conclusion

This does not excuse the media from their responsibility to question the utility and implications of Rushton's research.

I'm not a psychologist, like Rushton. But for the life of me I can't figure our why it would be important to establish a racially based evolutionary hierarchy. How does that improve our understanding of people or society?

I also can't figure out what use this is in social terms. Are we supposed to go out and change the Charter of Rights? Is his theory an attempt to justify discriminatory behavior?

Rushton's views are dangerous because they destabilize our society. Theories and views such as these should be confined to the academic arena, where they can be adequately analyzed and hopefully, refuted.

Until conclusive evidence can be presented supporting one side or the other, or until the press demonstrates a willingness to devote equal coverage to the *entire* debate, the media should not attempt to deal with academic research as controversial as this.

This is an argument for selfcensorship, of sorts. The media should realize its limitations.

As with any freedom, the freedom of the press comes with responsibilities.





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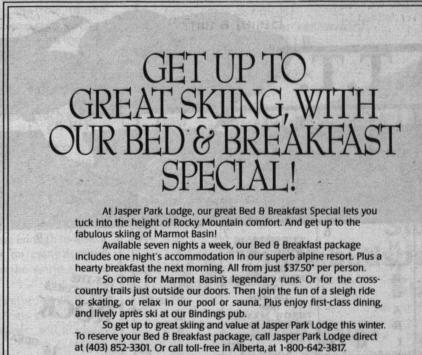
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