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Genetic basis

Panel discusses racism

By CHRISTOPHER GATES

The validity of the genetic basis of racism was the central theme of a panel discussion sponsored by the York Philosophy Association on Tuesday Nov. 6 in the faculty lounge.

Participating in the discussion were Prof. Edward Blackstock and Mr. Calvin Normore from the York psychology and philosophy departments, and Mr. Tony Leah from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

Leah objected to the use of western, white values and morals in testing intelligence in immigrants and the extrapolation of these test findings into scientific fact.

He' indicated that the scientific "proof" projected from these studies has received too much publicity and that this publicity should stop. Such "proof" is being used in various social programmes to supress minority groups as was evidenced recently in several of the southern states where female blacks were sterilized.

Leah also objected to the scientific identification of I.Q. with intelligence and to the theories put forth by "pseudo-scientists" like Arthur Jensen who say that I.Q. (intelligence) is hereditary and that blacks are genetically inferior to whites.

These theories are presented favourably according to Leah in several introductory Psychology texts used here at York and he feels they are dangerous because they justify the present status quo.

Blackstock defended the psychology department's use of these texts by pointing out that such theories must be presented to the students for them to accept or reject as they see fit. "Jensen must be able to tell it as he believes it."

According to Blackstock, a very real

threat to the educational process exists in groups like SDS which he feels are attempting to control what theories, racist or otherwise, are disseminated in our classrooms.

Normore said there is no factual evidence whatsover to suggest that intelligence is hereditary or differentiated by race.

He agreed with the SDS stand that it is deplorable to try to reconcile people in poor conditions to those conditions but said he felt vanguardism has crept into the SDS philosophy. He particularly objected to Leah's belief that research into hereditary rates should stop. "We need to know the social effects and interrelations of such theories and how they affect social policy."

Normore also said that SDS was perhaps confusing scientific theory with some absolute immutable truth. "Does a scientific theory have to have factual support? You have to have a hypothesis first in order to test it."

The question was raised whether students at York are encouraged to question theories like Jensen's. As Blackstock indicated, the authority to accept or reject theories like Jensen's must lie not with any one faculty or teacher but with the students.

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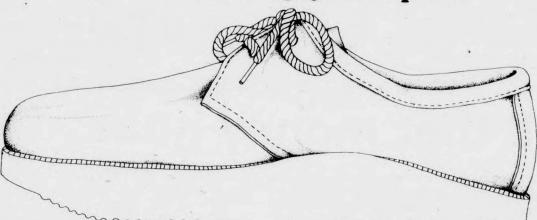
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