

Human Cloning Multiplies Problems

SCIENTISTS keep trying to assure the American people that it is impossible to clone human beings, as has been done with frogs.

The positive manner in which they make such declarations clearly indicates that some of them have been trying to do so. It does not stand as proof that an eccentric with weird ideas about redesigning the human race will not some day succeed.

Cloning has been defined as asexual, single-parent reproduction in which offspring have the same genetic blueprint as the parent. This may be a good, practical idea for raising livestock or crops, but its use for breeding people immediately stirs up religious, emotional, moral and social problems.

A book published some months ago describes a baby boy who was cloned from an eccentric aging millionaire as his genetic duplicate, and who is alive and well. The writer declares it is non-fiction, but critics have expressed doubts.

At times in history, political leaders have become obsessed with the ideas of establishing races of people with characteristics of their own choosing. While he was in power in Germany, Adolph Hitler made some attempts along these lines.

That can't happen here, but evidence is on file that certain scientists and bureaucrats lean toward regulation of families having children for economic or social reasons.

Congress has been considering legislation to regulate DNA research, as studies relating to cloning are called. Environmentalists fear that scientists might accidentally create and spread new diseases.

Scientists, in turn, are afraid their "academic freedom" for research might be endangered. From the way the proposed laws have been booted around, Congress may be scared of both groups.

Still, Americans have reason to be concerned about the possibility that scientists may discover the secret

of reproduction. If this occurs, political opportunists no doubt would visualize cloning of voters, who would always cast ballots for the incumbents, defeating what has been described as "groups of Xeroxed has-beens."

In his book "1984", George Orwell wrote about a world in which everything was controlled, including the bearing of children. An official told a citizen: "You must get rid of those 19th century ideas about the laws of nature. We make the laws of nature." This idea is not unknown in America today.

In a recent article titled "The Cloning Era's Almost Here," Fortune magazine concluded:

"In view of all this, the notion that we could produce geniuses by cloning geniuses seems rather fanciful. A clone of a great physicist, say, would almost certainly develop into a very intelligent person, but perhaps not into a great physicist — or even a physicist at all, or a great anything."