

Biological Engineering Moves Along

RESEARCH with a new technology called "recombinant DNA" is going ahead in many parts of the world. Scientists believe that it can be used to create new forms of life through biological engineering.

Suggestions that this might be used for political or other control of people have been countered with vigorous denials by those involved in the research. It may be true that few, if any, of these scientists would abuse the use of their discoveries.

Yet the evidence is clear that there are plenty of people around who would attempt almost anything to reshape the human race, or parts of it, to their own specifications. Here are a few examples.

Newspaper reports reveal that more than 20,000 prison and state hospital inmates in California were sterilized over a 60-year period. Perhaps 2,000 Oklahoma inmates underwent similar involuntary operations before the practice was stopped some years ago.

A California optometrist announced a scheme whereby sperm

from Nobel prize winners would be stored and used to impregnate selected women with high IQs.

"My slogan is, the more intelligent you are, the more children you should have," the promoter said.

Techniques for accelerating the breeding of livestock with desirable traits have been known for a long time. Similar procedures might be applied to humans under rigidly controlled conditions.

A couple of years ago Ward Merrick III of Ardmore owned a cow that set a world record of 83 pregnancies in 10 months. She was a superior cow, mated to a superior bull by artificial insemination. Embryos were transferred to carrier cows, which gave birth to calves.

Human cloning has been a controversial topic in recent years, but it is not believed to have been accomplished.

A professional science writer advanced the idea a few months ago that it isn't even necessary to have males in order to produce offspring

of specified conformation. Noting that parthenogenesis, reproduction without fertilization, exists in lower forms of life and has been accomplished with birds, the writer asks: "Why males?"

First step toward effectuating human biological engineering would be licensing of parenthood. This was described by George Orwell in his book, "1984," as a practice in the ultimate world dictatorship.

A few days ago, it was reported that the United States government has spent nearly \$100 million over the last eight years on overseas programs to promote voluntary sterilization as a means of birth control. If it works abroad, why not in the United States?

That, too, could be in our future as social reformers develop family and home programs in which government agencies exercise increasing amounts of influence and control.

It does not seem to be impossible that "Big Brother" might determine the number and kind of offspring your grandchildren might have!