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NRC

Excerpt from letter from JSDickey to CIBarnard, June 30, 1948

Sex research
Kinsey

Original filed: 903

Members and meetings
Candidates

I am afraid that I do not have any very useful views on the Kinsey Report. I have not taken the controversy concerning it very seriously. I have long since accepted the fact that any substantial public consideration of this subject is bound to draw fire, and in so far as I have followed the current reaction I very much agree with you that it is far less than I expected might be the case. I have no well-thought-out view concerning the wisdom of the Foundation having been involved in the introduction of the book. I can see that there are substantial advantages and disadvantages involved in it. Perhaps the very fact that I am not at the moment greatly concerned about the fact that the Foundation was involved in the introduction indicates that on the whole I place more weight on the advantages than the disadvantages.

I do ~~not~~ think that the popular exploitation of the book has been unfortunate. I suppose that a good bit of this might have been avoided, but I am genuinely doubtful that the large pattern of its public presentation could have been substantially altered. Without knowing the particular forces which are operating on you in this matter I hesitate to express an opinion concerning the advisability of making a statement about it, but I must say that on the whole my inclination is to avoid statements at this point in such controversies.

I have not commented upon the substance of the Report because I do not feel competent to do so. I have glanced over the entire Report and I have read several chapters with some care, but I certainly am not in a position to comment critically on the work as a whole. I certainly should not want to be included among those who take an adverse view of the undertaking. Just think what they'd be saying about the Foundation if it had built even the most cock-eyed telescope for Mr. Galileo, and yet today we bask in the glow of universal acclaim for having made possible the biggest and most perfect one the world has ever known. I have no doubt at all but that a few hundred years from now, assuming this civilization goes on, the Kinsey Report will be regarded as a most imperfect examination of this particular aspect of the cosmos, but the chances are that anything better which is done between now and then will be better largely because something was done which very possibly would not have been done except for the Foundation. That's the sort of plus which seems to me infinitely more valuable than all the negative wisdom which tends to make us comfortable about not doing things.