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FASHIONISMS

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Nonscience: or how to rule the world. By Brian J. Ford. Wolfe £2.00. 723 40413 5.

This is a satirical spoof in the tradition of Stephen Potter. Nonscience (pronounced to rhyme with conscience, or even as nonsense) is the game of pseudo-scientific one-upmanship played by the rulers of our technocratic society, the experts. The old-style science, which has now, of course, disappeared, was concerned with the search for truth and the welfare of mankind. But the aim of the experts is self-glorification, and they posture in public on the mass media in a vast, never-ending, public relations campaign.

Brian Ford provides a handbook for the aspiring expert, showing how to jump on to the bandwagon before it is too late. Success for the student of nonscience comes through the cultivation of the correct attitudes and the adoption of the right opinions, behaviour and dress. The

way is then open for the expert to become great and famous overnight, by starting a new fashion on which he is the acknowledged authority.

The key to it all is "fashionism", the ability to coin a new word or label or catchphrase to make your ideas (or somebody else's which you have pinched) all the rage. Ford completely loses his grip when he tries to trace past experts, but some of his contemporary examples are well chosen. Marshall McLuhan is, of course, a super-expert, except that his slogan "the medium is the message" contains its own downfall, since McLuhan's medium is a light-hearted, frolicking morass of superficial verbiage, so that it follows that the message must be the same.

For the true expert there is limitless scope. He could, with the authority due to one of his standing, justifiably condemn eating, drinking, thinking, sleeping, sex, and even breathing for what are plainly documented reasons. "Experts of the world, your time is now."