

# Government Tests in Schools

*Psychology*

Uncle Sam is planning to put at the disposal of workers, employees and schools the Government's psychological tests and methods which during the past five years have revolutionized the Federal Civil Service employment methods, Dr. L. J. O'Rourke, Director of Personnel Research, U. S. Civil Service Commission at Washington, revealed to the International Congress of Psychology at Yale.

The establishment of national industrial standards for use in industry and aid to vocational guidance in schools and colleges is the purpose of this most ambitious attempt to make America psychologically conscious since the days of the World War when the army was classified by the then newly developed intelligence tests.

During the next year a committee of industrialists headed by H. S. Dennison of the Dennison Manufacturing Company will aid the Federal psychologists in trying out the tests on selected representative groups of workers in actual business life and manufacturing. This experience added to information in Government files as the result of examining sixty thousand federal job seekers each year will allow the psychologists to tell just what scores must be made by applicants or students to qualify for the usual tasks of everyday life.

Not for at least a year will the first tests be issued by the Government. Attention will first be given to office work such as typing, sten-

ography, clerical work and book-keeping that absorb the energy of thousands of America's young women. Then qualifications for other common vocations will be determined and made known to those who hope to fill them.

"We hope to make it possible for schools to tell their students six months before graduation how they compare in ability with the actual workers in the positions to which they aspire," Dr. O'Rourke explained. "For instance, a student would be told that she is better than eighty per cent. in stenography but only better than thirty per cent. in English. Then she would know that she must improve her English. It will be much better for students to know this before they finish school rather than discover it when they are job seekers."

If the tests show that an applicant or student is not fitted for a position to which he aspires or that his superior abilities would be wasted there, it is planned to advise him just what work his qualifications seem to indicate. It is also planned to make the lists of qualified applicants for federal jobs available for private firms needing new workers.

Vast savings in industry could be made if business and industry leaders would enlist the services of psychologists who, after learning the job techniques and the feelings of the workers, could simplify work, prevent accidents, keep interest in the

work running high, and improve tools and working conditions, Dr. Walter V. Bingham of the Personnel Research Federation of New York City told the Congress.

Research into existing workers and their weaknesses is even more important than the proper hiring of new employees, he declared. How industry is beginning to appreciate what psychology can do for it is exemplified in a striking accident prevention effort directed by Dr. Bingham for the street railways of Boston. The past year during which psychologists personally studied motormen with many accidents on their records resulted in over a third less accidents. Worry over home life was one of the most frequent troubles of motormen with bad accident records.

Unhappily Dr. Bingham finds that there is a mere handful of psychologists, adequately trained and yet familiar with business and industrial worlds, who are capable of performing such service. A special sort of psychologist is necessary and he therefore urged that an institute of industrial psychology should be established in which graduate psychologists could be trained just as doctors are given finishing touches during their internships in hospitals. England, France, Germany and other countries have such institutes but America has been backward in this respect.

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## Why the Maiden's Blush?

*Psychology*

The rosy blush that is supposed to spread across the maiden's cheeks is not caused by fear or anger. Just the opposite emotion of shame is the cause of her mounting color, Dr. J. T. MacCurdy of Cambridge University, England, informed the International Congress of Psychology.

The ruddy badge of embarrassment was much more often worn in the days before we became civilized, he declared, and even today among savage peoples blushing is common in connection with eating, sleeping and illness as well as the common situations that embarrass modern maids and men.

Because the blush is caused by

a rush of blood to the cheeks some have thought that it is connected with extreme physical activity, but Dr. MacCurdy holds that immobility caused by a desire to hide is the true cause. And even more fundamentally blushing is a response to a dangerous situation and the attempt to avoid risk by concealment. For savages even eating and sleeping were dangerous performances much more safely pursued alone. They felt ashamed of their danger and therefore they blushed. Today shame of sex, even in the case of the modest virgin, lies at the root of most modern blushing.

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## Wood Acids Corrode Lead

*Chemistry*

The creosoted wood conduits in which lead-coated telephone cables are sometimes cased for protection may, under some circumstances, become a menace instead of a means of preservation, according to R. M. Burns and B. L. Clarke of the Bell Telephone Company. In a communication presented before the American Chemical Society, they told of discovering in the air contained in such conduits appreciable quantities of volatile acids capable of corroding the lead sheathing. They have devised a method of estimating the quantity of such acids present, and told of their findings on a number of different kinds of lumber.

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