

PSYCHOLOGY

# New Words for Campaigners

## Psychologists Studying Personality List Some 18,000 Terms That May Be Used To Describe Another Person

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER

**R**ECKLESS, unctuous, cold-blooded, starry-eyed, greedy! Wanton, arrogant! Waster! Spoiler! Shameful, fantastic, grotesque! Cruel, capricious, hysterical! Befogged, confused, irresponsible! Calculating, ambitious! Preadigitor! Incompetent, demoralizing, alien!

These are only a few of the epithets that are being hurled in the present political campaign. Daily and nightly stump speakers are dealing out invective from radio, stage and soap box. Did you ever think they might run out of words? One wonders, is there no limit to the names that one candidate may call another—names of abuse for the opposition nominee and flowery tribute for the candidate of the right party? How many such words are there in the whole English language?

Psychologists have given us the timely answer to this question in a new scientific study which should prove a veritable boon to political speakers. It lists no less than 17,953 terms that one candidate for office might call another without once repeating himself.

This volume was not prepared by either the Republican or the Democratic National Committee. It is entirely non-partisan. Its usefulness is not even confined to the political platform; you might refer to it yourself to freshen up your vocabulary the next time your neighbor fails to return your lawnmower or wants you to send back his umbrella.

### For Personality Study

The psychologists, Dr. Gordon W. Allport of Harvard University and Dr. Henry S. Odbert of Dartmouth College, were not primarily interested in rendering first aid to those whose blistering vocabularies were turning cold. They wanted to clarify the nomenclature used in the scientific study of human personality. So they set about trying to find out just how many words in the English language are used to describe some phase or other of character or human nature. This volume is the amazing result.

Maybe some of these thousands of terms overlap a bit in meaning here and

there. Some have become rare or obsolete with the passage of time. Others are as new as next year's automobile. But altogether these scientists found that their list had run to a total of nearly 18,000 terms. And at that they included only a few slang terms—those which come the nearest to being accepted words.

These terms are by no means all words of abuse, but it is in the invention of such terms that man has shown his greatest talent as a maker of language. And plenty of words of abuse have been retained in the language to find place on this new list. Let's just start with the A's, for example.

Abnormal, absurd, accursed, addle-brained, abysmal, abrasive, acrid, aimless, ambiguous, alcoholic, aping, anti-social, appalling, arid, arrant, asinine, anarchistic, apish, apathetic, applause-seeking, afterwitted, abandoned, alarmist, aldermanic, amatory, arrogant, attitudinizing, atheist, autocratic, avaricious, atrocious, audacious, average, and awful.

### A to Z

The list, of course, covers the whole range of the alphabet. Beginning with "abandoned," a word with which everyone is familiar, it ends with less well known words such as "zetetic," which is complimentary, and "zebrine," which is not.

Words which liken a person to an animal contribute a large share to the list. Most of these are uncomplimentary, but there are exceptions such as "thoroughbred," and perhaps even "foxy" and "bird" need not be derogatory.

Of course you know and could hardly do without these words: asinine, bull-headed, catty, and cur. But are these in your everyday vocabulary: harebrained, beef-witted, mutton-headed, pigeon-hearted, poll-parrot, and even worm? The complete list would be much too long, but here are a few more: bellwether, bird, boarish, bug, bulldog, buzzard, calf, canine, cat, chicken, chicken-hearted, clam, clammy, cod, colt, cuckoo, dog, duck, fish, hen-hearted, hoggish, leech, one-horse, pet, polecat, and rat.

Perhaps such terms as "egg," and "fossil" might come into this classifica-

tion, too, but that is a little far fetched.

The plant world has also contributed its share of colorful adjectives and nouns to dress up the comments of one person about another. Here are a few: hayseed; cabbage-head, nut and nutty, sap, sap-headed, and sappy; seeded and seedy; lemon; pansy; peach and peachy; gillyflower; and gooseberry.

The earth itself has lent itself to analogous terms of varying meanings. One person may be described as "dry-as-dust," and another as "clay-cold" or a "clod-hopper." Then there are clay-brained, clod, clod-pate, and clod-poll.

Here are more inspired by nature: Breezy, fresh-water, mountainous, thunderous, thunderless, and torrential.

### Personality Colors

Did you ever happen to think how many terms for humans are derived from colors? You may speak of a girl as "colorful" or a man as "off-color."

The untrained worker is a "green-horn," but if he is fired he may become "blacklisted," especially if he is mixed up with a "blackguardly," "black-mouthed," "red" agitator. But if he shows the "white feather" his comrades may call him "yellow."

Although the girl friend may be "true-blue," if she shows interest in a rival, her lover may become "green-eyed" and yet at the same time "blue." In spite of the fact that she is "fair" she may have a "dull" sister and a "grimy" brother. And, if she is "green" enough, she may run off with a "black-leg."

It seems odd that tastes should provide terms for human personality, yet a few such are included in the list. Briny, candied, greasy, and palatable are examples.

Kitchen and cookery give us a rich list. Perhaps it is there that heated words fly and so new terms are most often originated. Suppose the cook were describing the folks she knows.

Maybe the woman she works for is "milk-livered," but her husband is "hard-boiled." Still she has a young son who is "half-baked" and "milk-soppy." The mother-in-law is "peppery," and the young daughter of the family is a "prune." There is a "pudding-headed" sister, and a "milk-and-water" brother, an uncle who is "unsavory," and a

father who is a "pickle." This by no means exhausts the possibilities.

We may describe a person in terms of our sensations. A lady is spoken of as "cold," a friend as "warm." A boss may be "hard," or an employe "soft." An entertainer may turn out to be "wet." And so it goes.

### From the Body

The body itself provides some vivid descriptive terms. Everyone knows what is meant when a man is referred to as "just a heel." Here are some others that may not be quite so familiar: bloodless, brainless, dry-bones, fist, high-hearted, high-stomached, brainsick.

Early medicine, with its theories of the "humors" of the body, brought with it terms, then scientific, now an integral part of the common speech and indispensable in daily use. The word "humorous" itself has this origin although its meaning has greatly changed during the passing of the years. Then there are "good-humored" and "bad-humored," which have clung more closely to their original significance. Here are some more: sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, melancholy, hearty, heartless, cordial, hypochondriacal with its modern abbreviation "hipped," temperament, cold-blooded.

And that leads us to astrology and the ancient idea that the heavenly bodies influenced those born while they were in the ascendancy. So we have these words: lunatic, jovial, saturnine, mercurial, martial, and ill-starred.

Modern science, and especially, of course, psychology, has contributed a generous share of terms in recent years. In this group are such words as these: anthropoid, prophylactic, atavistic, introverted, extroverted, neurotic, regressive, psychasthenic, eidetic, cyclothymic, schizoid, psychoneurotic, psychopathic, and so on.

Religion has been generous in contributing to the list of available terms to apply to our neighbors.

What term is more universally useful and more expressive than the word "dunce"? That was first hurled at another person during the heated arguments of the days of the Protestant reformation and is derived from the name of Duns Scotus, great British medieval philosopher. Those days also brought us such excellent words as "malignant," "pernicious," "bigoted," and "fanatic." They have also bequeathed us the more complimentary terms: "pious," "sincere," and "precise."

### Scorn for Country

The feeling of superiority shared by all city-dwellers at the expense of their country cousins is reflected by the number of derogatory or semi-derogatory terms connected with the country and parallel complimentary terms derived from words for city.

Bumpkin, rustic, countrified, boorish, boor, churl, churlish, villain, clodhopper, bog-trotter, hayseed, yokel, rube! Those are a few of the country-derived words. On the other side of the

picture are such smooth words as urbane and metropolitan.

But to return to the field of politics and war, here is a rich opportunity for the coining of new and vivid terms for other humans. Red-blooded words they are too, and full of meaning; fighting words, words to make the heart beat faster and the fists fly.

### Crusades Contributed

From the days of the Crusades we have inherited the punch-loaded words, assassin and miscreant. The former of these originally meant merely hashish-eaters, but another and richer meaning was read into it by the soldiers of that day, and with this richer meaning it has become a permanent part of the English language. Miscreant, similarly, had an original meaning of misbeliever, but today it is retained with a meaning more like mis-behaver.

In our own day we have learned new words or new meanings for old ones. We have "chiseler," "braintruster," and "boondogger."

Campaigns of bygone years gave us pussyfooter, mollycoddle, mugwump, carpetbagger, muckraker, dry, pacifist, scofflaw, snooper, palm-greaser, propagandist.

The Great War and the recent "red-baiting" have given us slacker, hyphenate, Hun, Boche, red, Bolshevik and Bolshevik.

But all these are but a few of the possible classifications for this strange dictionary of human appraisal. The authors  
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### HONORS GEOLOGIST

On the campus of Oklahoma State Teachers' College the memory of the late Dr. David White, noted scientist of the U. S. Geological Survey and trustee of Science Service, is preserved in this giant petrified tree stump.

GEOLOGY

## 350,000,000-Year-Old Monument to Geologist

**A**N EMINENT American geologist, the late Dr. David White, has been given a most fitting memorial monument on the campus of the State Teachers' College at Ada, Okla. It is the base of a petrified trunk of one of the oldest trees in the world, known to scientists as Callixylon, dating back to Devonian time, 350,000,000 years ago.

When the petrified tree was found, about 20 miles from Ada, John Fitts, a friend and admirer of Dr. White, arranged to have the mass of stone moved and set up on the campus.

Before his death in 1935, Dr. White was principal geologist of the U. S. Geological Survey, curator of paleobotany of the U. S. National Museum, and a trustee of Science Service.

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themselves have undertaken a classification of their own which is more useful for the scientific purpose for which the list was originally designed.

#### Four and a Half Per Cent

In the first place, they needed to decide what should go into the list and what should be discarded from it. Included are all of the words descriptive of personality or personal behavior, except those that are obsolete, that are included in Webster's New International Dictionary. Altogether 400,000 words were combed through to secure the list, and 17,953 were selected—4½ per cent of the total English vocabulary.

The adjective form of a word was used, and other forms discarded from the list, except when different forms of the word have different meanings as in the case of "sour" and "soured." A person is "sour" because of his natural disposition, but he is "soured" because of his experiences in life. Both these forms are retained.

A few slang terms are included.

Words were included only if they served to distinguish one human being from another. Such terms as "walking" or "digesting" were discarded on this ground while terms like "mincing" or "dyspeptic" were included.

When the list was assembled, and the unsuitable words discarded, the remaining 18,000 were divided into four groups which are printed in four parallel columns.

The first column, containing about 25 per cent of the total words, contains the words which stand most clearly for the real traits of personality. In this column are such words as "aggressive, introverted, and sociable." These are not just terms of abuse or praise, they really describe the nature of man.

In the second column are terms descriptive of present, or momentary, activity or mood. Here are such words as "abashed, rejoicing, frantic."

#### Character Evaluations

In column three are the evaluations of character. It is this column that should prove the particular boon to stump speakers. Here are words like "dazzling," "irritating," "insignificant," "acceptable," "worthy." This column starts out with "abnormal, absorbing, absurd, accursed, addle-brained." It ends with "yegg, yellow, yellowish, yokel, youngling, youthful, zany, and zeating." This column is the longest of the four. In this list of abuse and commendation are 5,226 terms, or 29 per cent of the total list.

Column four contains those words which can be classified best under the term "miscellaneous." Here are the words which are the despair of editors and classifiers, words which apply to human character because of their metaphorical nature or because of meanings read into them during the course of time. Here are such terms as "red-headed, hoarse, malformed, pampered."

Column four begins with such terms as "abortive, abrasive, absolute, abysmal,

Achilleian." It ends with "yeasty, young-eyed, zebrine, zoid, and zoophilous."

Together the four columns should serve a great many serious and trivial purposes and may one day take a place along with the dictionary and the thesaurus on the desk of those who wish a mastery of words.

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PHYSIOLOGY-PSYCHOLOGY

## Freezing Affects Mind First; Initiative and Modesty Lost

**A**N EXPERIMENT in which a noted physiologist, Sir Joseph Barcroft of Cambridge University, England, deliberately froze himself nearly to death, was reported by Sir Joseph in a lecture at Yale University.

The mind was first to suffer in the freezing process, as shown by loss of initiative and of a natural sense of modesty, Sir Joseph reported. He cautioned against taking such liberties with the mind.

The experiment was part of a study to learn how the human mind is affected by changes in the internal environment of the body. In other similar experiments, Sir Joseph stayed in a room filled with deadly hydrocyanic acid gas until a dog with him died, and later stayed for twenty minutes in a room containing 7.2 per cent of carbon dioxide gas.

Man's intellectual development and motility, Sir Joseph pointed out in his lecture, depend on the temperature and other factors of his internal environment remaining constant. As little as one degree of fever affects the mental processes.

"In each of the two experiments which I performed there was a moment when my whole mental outlook altered," Sir Joseph said in describing his feelings during near-freezing.

"As I lay naked in the cold room I had been shivering and my limbs had been flexed in a sort of effort to huddle up, and I had been very conscious of the cold. Then a moment came when I stretched out my legs; the sense of coldness passed away, and it was succeeded by a beautiful feeling of warmth; the word 'bask' most fitly describes my condition: I was basking in the cold.

"Up to the point at which shivering ceased, nature fought the situation; my

instinct was to be up and about, an effort of will was necessary to remain the subject of the experiment; after that point I gladly acquiesced, initiative had gone. Doubtless a second and more advanced stage would follow in which inertia would lapse into unconsciousness. For I suppose that, had the experiment not ended at that point, my temperature would have fallen rapidly and I was on the verge of the condition of travelers when they go to sleep in extreme cold never again to awake.

"And I was conscious of other reversions of mental state: not only was there a physical extension of the limbs, but with it came a change in the general mental attitude. The natural apprehension lest some person alien to the experiment should enter the room and find me quite unclad disappeared."

Sir Joseph concluded from his various experiments on himself that the most immediate effect of interference with the chemical or physical properties of the blood is impairment of the higher qualities of the mind.

"The thoughts of the human mind," he said, "its power to solve differential equations, or to appreciate exquisite music, involve some physical or chemical pattern, which would be blurred in a milieu itself undergoing violent disturbances."

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Although the wild bean known as St. Ignatius bean, in Philippine forests, contains strychnine, it has so far found only slight use in commerce.

Studying the life histories of single rainstorms, scientists have discovered that rainfall in a storm varies from spot to spot much more than was suspected.