

PSYCHOLOGY

Brooklyn Syndrome

A chip-on-the-shoulder defensiveness characteristic of men from crowded districts may be mistaken for mental disorder, navy officers reveal.

► “BROOKLYN SYNDROME” is the name jokingly applied by Navy physicians to a sort of chip-on-the-shoulder defensiveness of men from crowded districts of some of our larger cities as well as some rural regions in western Pennsylvania.

Although a perfectly harmless social pattern, this characteristic truculence may be mistaken in a hurried induction examination for psychopathic personality and may even result in the rejection of men who would make perfectly good soldiers.

This is revealed by three physicians of the Psychiatric Unit, U. S. Naval Training Station in Newport, R. I. (*Journal of Psychology*, July). They are Lieut. Comdrs. C. L. Wittson, H. I. Harris and W. A. Hunt.

A re-examination of men classified as 4F for neuropsychiatric reasons is urged by these officers as well worth the time and effort involved. The very brief examination which rushed wartime conditions make necessary causes mistakes in both directions—inducting the unfit and rejecting those fit for military service, they believe.

The Navy is now receiving most of their recruits from the Army induction centers. But the Navy gives its own examination to the men before assigning them to duty. Of the first 1,622 inductees received at the Newport Training Station, 5.8% were discharged as unfit for duty, the Navy officers report. This proportion was checked by the next 1,452. Of these, 5.65% were discharged. The discharged men included men who had been in the hospital for mental disease, epileptics, feeble-minded, and illiterates.

But the Navy does not discharge a man on the basis of this re-examination. First they send them to a hospital for observation. The observation period shows that the Navy doctors can make mistakes in a brief examination, too. About 35 out of each hundred men admitted to wards for study are finally sent out to duty.

The excitement of the examination may cause a dull normal man to appear feeble-minded, the report warns.

“For many of them joining the Navy is the most important occasion of their lives to date, and this examination may constitute a situation of greater psychological strain than anything to be later encountered in service,” the report explains.

To the physician, the examination is an old story. He examines large numbers of men day after day. It is easy for him to forget or overlook what the examination means to the recruit.

Fatigue may make a man seem feeble-minded or even mentally ill. If the examination comes at the end of a hard day followed by a sleepless night that may be enough to make a man act queer. And the boy who is very homesick, or the country boy in the city for the first time, may present a misleading picture to the psychiatrist.

Faking the symptoms of mental illness or mental deficiency is, however, very rare, the officers state. Physicians are much more likely to be fooled in the opposite direction. Men will lie about having been previously treated for mental illness, and they will try to hide important facts that might lead to rejection. And yet the physician must depend, in many cases, on what the recruit says. It is very difficult to detect cases of sleep-walking, for example, unless the man speaks truthfully about it. An epileptic is hard to detect unless he should conveniently throw a fit during the examination.

Science News Letter, August 28, 1943

GENERAL SCIENCE

New Induction Ruling Channels Scientific Skills

► SCIENTIFIC SKILLS will be channelled into the most urgent war jobs through changes in induction rules announced by the War Manpower Commission which put 25 kinds of scientists on the critical occupations list.

These scientists will receive special consideration for Selective Service occupational deferment unless they fail to obtain a job in war industry or supporting civilian activities by Oct. 1. To

place the scientists where they are needed most, provision is made for their hiring only upon referral by or with consent of the U. S. Employment Service. Scientists not yet in essential industry should register with their local employment offices.

Scientists included in the new ruling are accountants, agronomists, anatomists, naval architects, astronomers, bacteriologists, chemists, professional or technical engineers, entomologists, foresters, geologists, geophysicists, horticulturists, mathematicians, metallurgists, meteorologists, nematologists, oceanographers, parasitologists, medical pathologists, pharmacologists, physicists, medical physiologists, plant physiologists or pathologists, and seismologists.

Persons teaching these professions or engaged in full-time inspection work requiring knowledge of the sciences are entitled to the same rating as those in actual practice.

Science News Letter, August 28, 1943

GENERAL SCIENCE

Demand for Scientists Becoming More Urgent

► NEED for trained scientific research workers and teachers is constantly becoming more urgent, declares Dr. Homer L. Dodge, director of the Office of Scientific Personnel, National Research Council. Requests for college graduates in scientific subjects, especially physics, are constantly being received beyond the capacity of his office to supply them. He also has calls from the armed services, government agencies, war industries and educational institutions for mathematicians and geologists, and for biologists trained in bacteriology, nutrition, plant pathology and animal physiology.

“This office,” Dr. Dodge stated, “has been set up in the National Research Council to render a highly personal service in finding men and women for positions in those scientific and technical fields in which the greatest shortages exist. It operates in cooperation with other personnel agencies of the Government, but maintains its own file of available persons.”

Dr. Dodge requests all persons who have sufficient training and experience to work in any of these highly critical fields to communicate at once with him at: Office of Scientific Personnel, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington 25, D. C.

Science News Letter, August 28, 1943