

PSYCHIATRY

Poverty Causes Violence

Extreme poverty and social deprivation, rather than civil rights issues, lead to resentments, mental imbalance and violence affecting Negroes as well as whites—By Faye Marley

► CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION had nothing to do with the recent Negro riots in Harlem and elsewhere, a "forensic" psychiatrist who works with court cases at St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D. C., told SCIENCE SERVICE. Forensic refers to both criminal and civil cases.

Dr. David H. Dabney, who did his internship at Harlem Hospital in New York ten years ago, had this to say:

"When I rode ambulances in Harlem during my internship, I saw why people in this neighborhood could build up to serious trouble. Something should have been done long ago to prevent the outbreak that occurred this summer. Crowded living conditions among impoverished people can only lead to tragedy.

"Negro policemen and social workers have been attacked as well as white officials."

Dr. Dabney is often threatened with bodily harm by his mental patients at St. Elizabeths when they resent commitment.

"Negroes as well as whites are in danger from psychotic or repressed members of their own race," he said. "I try to understand why Negro rioters are like they are, when their resentments build up to anti-social behavior."

Among so-called lower-class and violent types of Negroes, the psychiatrist explained, there is a feeling that Negro "white collar" leaders have left them out. Students, for example, who are sent to integrated colleges as test cases are not particularly underprivileged. They have good manners, dress well and usually have money enough to pay their way.

This type of middle-class Negro has been used in test cases in the South, Dr. Dabney said. The lower-class Negro, on the contrary, has not been utilized by his own race.

Just as there is a white power structure, these ignored Negroes believe that attempts are being made to establish leadership in which they have no part. So, like naughty children, they attract attention by violent behavior.

President Johnson's poverty bill may accomplish what the Emancipation Proclamation left undone, Dr. Dabney said.

"I am the great-grandson of Virginia slaves," he added. "In my own family I have heard of injustices that went on before President Lincoln ever freed the slaves. But one thing that the Proclamation did not do was to help the Negroes to take care of their needs. They were freed without elementary preparation for freedom. Many of them were mentally ill or incapable of taking care of themselves."

Asked about the Black Muslim movement, Dr. Dabney said it offers shelter to groups of neglected and ignored Negroes, and as long as it remains within the law it has its place.

Dr. Dabney spoke about frontiers in forensic psychiatry at the National Medical Association convention, Washington, D. C. He emphasized the need for rehabilitation of persons who come in contact with civil and criminal law.

About 80% of the patients at St. Elizabeths Hospital are Negroes, he said. Many of them have "acquired" mental deficiency because they are illiterate and have such severe social deprivation that they have deficient social reasoning and judgment.

• Science News Letter, 86:114 Aug. 22, 1964

PHARMACOLOGY

Drug to Aid Breathing Awaits FDA Approval

► A DRUG that stimulates breathing in persons who suffer from such respiratory disorders as asthma and emphysema is awaiting approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

The drug, called Dimefine, causes deeper breathing and adds oxygen to the blood. Wampole Laboratories, Stamford, Conn., is making application for the drug.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Orphan Monkeys Afraid

► MONKEYS deprived of their mothers from birth show less interest in looking at various objects than do monkeys normally reared.

Chicago scientists made this discovery by placing individual monkeys from two groups, one mother-reared and the other not, into a chamber containing two distinctively painted bars on opposite walls. By pressing either bar, the monkey saw an object in a booth that opened up behind the bar pushed.

Objects used for the study were food, geometric forms, adult female "mother" monkeys and monkeys of the same age as the test monkeys. Empty booths were also used interchangeably with these objects.

The mother-reared group showed clear preferences for looking at food and other monkeys, rather than at empty booths. The response of the deprived group was so low in all cases that no clear preferences could be determined.

Soon after birth, the mother-reared mon-

keys showed great interest in the adult female "mother" monkeys. As they grew older, these monkeys displayed less interest in "mothers" and showed more enthusiasm about monkeys their own age.

The monkeys brought up without a mother demonstrated no significant change in their lack of response as time went on. Throughout the study, these monkeys appeared fearful, and continuously crouched in one of the chamber's corners after sampling the objects.

This fear shown by the motherless monkeys can be explained by the conditions under which they grew. Each of these monkeys, right after birth, was put into a cage by himself, and handled only when fed and examined.

The study was reported in Science, 145: 292, 1964, by Dr. Phillip C. Green, Institute for Psychosomatic and Psychiatric Research and Training, Michael Reese Hospital, Chicago, and Dr. Michael Gordon, the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Chicago.

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