

## ENGINEERING

# Modified Blackouts Suggested By Electrical Engineer

**By Dimming Only Tell-Tale Patterns of Lights Along  
Highways, Avenues and Bridges, Enemy Would Be Fooled**

**M**ODIFIED blackouts, or "dimouts" for American cities were suggested by S. G. Hibben, electrical engineer and member of the National Technological Civil Protection Committee at a military protective lighting symposium in New York. The symposium was held as part of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers' mid-winter meeting.

Mr. Hibben stated that adoption of European all-out blackout methods may be unnecessarily dangerous and is certain to be costly for American cities.

"If the main signposts leading to targets cannot be located (by enemy pilots)," Mr. Hibben said, "90% of the big job has been done. It makes little difference to a pilot that there may be countless fireflies of light in residential areas on the ground. He must disregard the aimless twinkling of meaningless lights and look for main arteries and important centers like Broadway and Times Square, from which he must calculate the location of objectives."

Mr. Hibben suggested that by blacking out only tell-tale map patterns made by prominent avenues, bridges and highways, targets will be as obscure as it is economically practicable to make them.

Questioned concerning Mr. Hibben's plan, OCD officials in Washington re-

fused comment, except to say he was being listened to "with care."

Meanwhile OCD, it was learned, will announce shortly the selection of six universities divided between the east and west coasts to train "super-instructors" in air raid procedure. These super-instructors, selected by their communities, will be used to train other instructors, who in turn will set up classes in the communities for citizens.

Communities within 300 miles of either coast will be singled out for emphasis in instruction, OCD officials said.

The first of the University classes for super-instructors will open in California by the second week in February.

Classes for super-instructors will operate under the War Department, and will offer 83 hours instruction during a two-weeks' course. The instruction will include extinguishing of incendiary bombs, gas decontamination, and organization of training centers.

Super-instructors are to be selected by communities on a quota basis, with emphasis on the coastal cities, it was explained.

A model course for super-instructors has been in operation for some weeks at Edgewood Arsenal, near Aberdeen, Md.

*Science News Letter, February 21, 1942*

"The best way to utilize this increased release of national energy is for people to put more energy into their daily routine and for us speedily to find war-effort jobs for every man, woman, and child not otherwise employed. If this is not done, people will 'emote' too much, damage their mental and physical health."

The manner of presenting the news is perhaps more important than the content. Strident, excited voices damage morale. Calm, factual presentations create confidence. It is much more serious to put rumor and unconfirmed reports on the air than to publish them in a newspaper, the editorial states.

"The press has a professional tradition that distinguishes clearly between the news and 'allegations' and rumors. In addition, the reader is not hurried, can check and compare, and is not so stimulated by printed words as hearers are by spoken words."

"Probably no good purpose is served by broadcasting anything from the Axis powers, even including their official communiques," the editorial says. "While we know they are mainly lies or twisted truth, they still confuse, irritate, spread doubt and fear, and rouse pointless rage. All of this uses up the energy and wastes the emotional drive that should go into the war effort. It lessens morale."

"It is also undesirable that the same news should be repeated over and over even when it is authentic and has been approved by responsible persons. Perhaps four officially sifted news periods a day would be enough. It would save millions of hours of pointless listening, millions of kilowatt hours of electricity, and billions of ergs of emotional power."

"A good slogan for this war would be 'Less Listening and More Labor.'"

*Science News Letter, February 21, 1942*

## PSYCHOLOGY

# New Mental Ill Forecast; It Is "Radio Fatigue"

"**R**ADIO fatigue" is a new mental disease forecast editorially by the *American Sociological Review* (February).

If it develops as a mass affliction of the American radio public, it will be from an excessive listening to emotional broadcasts of war news, and ranting of misguided propagandists who stir up "ephemeral emotion which cannot build tanks but does disturb digestions and impair mental and physical efficiency."

"The first news of the bombing at Hawaii probably released enough energy," the editorial stated, "caused enough emotion, to build thousands of tanks and bombers—if it could have been directed into proper channels. As it was, it merely produced headaches, stomachaches, sugar in the urine, loss of sleep, and widespread wastage of our most precious national resource—emotional drive. Thus, it damaged morale—for the moment."

## PSYCHIATRY

# Absence of Uniforms Seen As Preventing Neuroses

**U**NIFORMS may be a hindrance in many volunteer jobs when you're trying to inspire confidence rather than obedience.

Now that some of the arguments over women's uniforms seem to have been ended by a cloth shortage, this may be welcome news to many volunteer workers.

Physicians in naval hospitals have found that wearing uniforms actually diminishes their patients' confidence. Particularly on the psychiatric wards the Navy psychiatrists try, so far as is com-