

PSYCHIATRY

Reject "Bad Risks"

Army growing more strict about mental health requirements for inductees. Over seven per cent now rejected on this basis. Shortage of psychiatrists hampers work.

► THE ARMY is tightening up on mental health requirements for the induction examination.

Modern warfare is tough. And the men who go into it must be in top-notch mental as well as physical health. The Army does not want to be burdened with men who can get by under normal civilian living conditions, but who would go to pieces mentally if they had to face enemy fire or the strains of prolonged hardship in battle areas.

Seven or eight men out of every 100 who come up for induction examination are now rejected because they are what insurance men would call "poor risks" from a mental health standpoint. This is according to the latest figures available which date back to July of this year.

That was before the 1B men were reclassified and those fit for limited service put into 1A. Just what effect the calling of men with physical defects and older age groups will have on the rejection rates for mental reasons cannot be predicted. It may be that more of these men will be found unsuited to Army life. It may be that fewer will have to be turned down.

The rejection rate for mental and nervous causes varied between 6.8% and 8.4% during the months from April, 1942, to July.

This information was furnished to Science Service by Col. R. D. Halloran, head of the new Psychiatric Division of the Army Surgeon General's Office, in response to an inquiry about Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's fear, expressed in her newspaper column after a recent visit to a San Francisco Army hospital, that "We are not giving our draftees a sufficiently careful psychiatric examination before they are taken into service."

Col. Halloran quoted the figures that indicate a trend toward a more critical examination. When draftees were put through a double screening of local Selective Service examination plus an Army induction examination only about 5% were rejected.

For the beginning of 1942, when the Army first took over complete responsibility for the examination, comparable

figures are not available. It seems likely, however, that standards may not have been so strict—certainly they varied from place to place and the whole examination procedure was experimental. Men who should have been rejected, but who slipped through the examination net at that time might be showing up as hospital cases now.

"I believe that now we are doing a very good selection job with what facilities we have available," Col. Halloran said.

The Army is seriously handicapped by a severe manpower shortage of psychiatrists. There are only about 3,000 psychiatrists in the whole United States, Col. Halloran said. Of these, nearly a third are in the Army, among them a large proportion of younger men. It is necessary to leave some to man all the mental hospitals for civilians, although these have been cut to the bone.

In all communities where there are properly trained and experienced civilian psychiatrists available, their services are asked and are generously given on induction boards, he said. There are many communities throughout the nation where there just aren't any psychiatrists.

To these localities, the Army sends their own psychiatrists. Each Induction Board has at least one psychiatrist, and each draftee or recruit must pass examination by a psychiatrist—a brief one, to be sure—before he can enter the Army.

The Army is also handicapped by the speed which men must be examined and the numbers passing before the Induction Board at one time. Psychiatrists are used, in civilian life, to devoting many hours to a psychiatric examination. It is not like a lung examination or syphilis test where X-rays or laboratory data tell the whole story. The psychiatrist must consider the whole man and the way he reacts as a complete personality to strain, responsibility and hard work.

"When you have examined 70 men in a day," Col. Halloran explained, "it is possible that you might miss subtle signs in the 71st man that you would have picked up in the first man. Physicians get tired, too."

The Army is now working out methods of improving the examination and securing facts about the man's past history not now available. In some localities, a cooperative scheme is being worked out by which the State Mental Hospitals are furnishing to Induction Boards records of hospital treatment on men coming up for Army examination, and social workers for the Red Cross are checking up on what is known locally about the man's ability to keep out of trouble at home. If successful, these methods will be applied on a nation-wide scale.

Science News Letter, October 24, 1942

FORESTRY

African Mahogany Trees Grow Well in Florida

► MAHOGANY for future fleets of speed boats, as well as for home and hotel furniture, may come from cultivated forests of African trees grown in Florida. Experimental plantings of Rhodesian mahogany trees on the grounds of the subtropical experiment station of the University of Florida, are catching up in height with native fast-growing pines twice their age, have trunks twice the diameter of pines as old as themselves, and appear to be forming wood four or five times as fast. (See photograph on page 259.)

On the strength of this performance, S. J. Lynch and H. S. Wolfe of the experiment station staff express the opinion that they "appear to be the most promising hardwoods for reforestation in South Florida that have been tested by the Sub-Tropical Experiment Station."

The trees belong to one of two African genera of mahoganies, and are known botanically as *Khaya nyasica*. To distinguish them from other African mahogany species, it is proposed to call this species East African or Rhodesian mahogany. The African mahoganies generally are closely related to the American genus, *Swietenia*.

The oldest trees in the plantings, although set out in rather unpromising-looking sites only 12 years ago, already have seven- to eight-inch trunks and average around 40 feet in height. Although distinctly tropical in origin, they have survived several cold spells, including one freeze when the temperature dropped to 27 degrees Fahrenheit. So far, the trees have not been attacked by insect pests or diseases.

Science News Letter, October 24, 1942