

PSYCHOLOGY

Play One-Armed Bandit In Interests of Science

► THE MORE FREQUENTLY a slot machine pays off, the quicker will the player give up pulling the handle after it stops rewarding him.

This negative effect of the payoffs was discovered in experiments conducted at Northwestern University by Drs. Donald J. Lewis and Carl P. Duncan.

The familiar "one-armed bandit" was used in the experiments, but the machine was rigged so the psychologist could set it to pay off from eight times out of eight pulls down to never. After eight pulls, no one was paid off. After that, the pulls were counted to see who would persist the longest.

Evidently, the man who has found that the machine pays off only once out of eight pulls will keep pulling longer, hoping for a payoff, than will the man who has been paid off on every pull or every other pull.

The 350 men and women college students who took part in the gambling experiment did not play with their own money. The machine worked on chromium plated steel disks, and each student was permitted to help himself to these out of a cash drawer and feed them to the one-armed bandit.

When he was paid off, the disks came from a separate supply held in a special reservoir in the machine. At the end of play, each disk could be cashed in for a nickel. The familiar lemons and oranges turned up in the window of the machine.

The first ones to quit playing the machine were those who had been rewarded on every single play until payoff stopped after the eighth pull. Details of the experiment are reported in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* (July).

Science News Letter, June 23, 1956

MEDICINE

Speed Worm Cure to Days Instead of Weeks

► CURE of two worm infections can now be achieved in one week or less instead of the two to three weeks formerly needed, Drs. Harold W. Brown, Kam-Fai Chan and Kathleen L. Hussey of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (June 9).

The method is to give the worm medicine, piperazine citrate, in large daily doses instead of in smaller doses several times a day. With this method, 58 of 60 patients were cured of pinworms in seven days instead of 14. One large dose cured 34 of 46 victims of roundworms, while two large doses cured 50 of 53 patients.

Pinworms infect 16,000,000 persons in the United States and more than 200,000,000 persons in the world, it is estimated. The infection is not limited to the poor and rural classes, but is found in all groups.

Science News Letter, June 23, 1956

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