

PSYCHOLOGY

# Psychologists Organize In National Emergency

## Committee Formed Under National Research Council To Coordinate Research and Aid National Government

**O**RGANIZATION of psychologists to aid in problems of national defense is disclosed in announcement of an Emergency Committee on Psychology of the National Research Council.

The committee will attempt to keep in touch with and coordinate psychological work being done in the nation with a view to preventing duplication of effort and to being able to furnish any aid that may be requested by the Federal Agencies.

Scientists whose research or special knowledge would contribute to the psychological defense of the nation are urged in an announcement in the *Journal of Consulting Psychology* (Jan.-Feb.) to send their ideas direct to Dr. Karl M. Dallenbach, of Cornell University, chairman of the Emergency Committee. This, it is felt, will avoid the confusion and delay that might result were individuals to communicate directly with agencies or officials of the Government.

Included on the committee's membership are nine prominent psychologists, among them specially appointed representatives of all the leading national psychological associations.

Contact with the Government is provided for in the selection of two members of the Committee, Prof. Robert M. Yerkes and Prof. Walter R. Miles, both of Yale University, to get in touch informally with individuals in the Federal Government to express the willingness of psychologists of the nation to render service in furthering national defense.

Action was taken by the Committee at its first meeting on several urgent problems, and research programs of defense importance were discussed.

The effect of war experiences on the lives of individuals will be given special study by Prof. R. A. Brotemarkle, of the University of Pennsylvania, and a group of psychologists he will pick to assist him.

It was recommended that problems of perception be studied by a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Prof. S. W. Fernberger, of the University of Pennsylvania.

Published material having to do with military psychology will be canvassed and listed under the direction of Prof. Carroll C. Pratt, of Rutgers University.

Necessity for investigating problems of nervous ills in connection with the present emergency was discussed. Another Committee of the Research Council on Problems of Neurotic Behavior will be requested to consider such problems which would include the working out of methods for detecting and caring for neurotic persons.

The Committee considered a request for the names of psychologists acquainted with South America, having traveled, taught, or done research there, and of those able to speak Spanish and Portuguese. This request was referred to Dr.

Leonard Carmichael, a member of the Committee who is also director of the Government's National Roster of Scientific and Specialized Personnel.

Members of the Committee are: Dr. Carl E. Guthe, University of Michigan, chairman of the Research Council's Division of Anthropology and Psychology (ex officio); Dr. Karl M. Dallenbach, Cornell University, chairman of the Committee, representative of the psychology section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; Prof. Gordon Allport, Harvard University, representing the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues; Prof. R. A. Brotemarkle, University of Pennsylvania, representing the American Association for Applied Psychology, President Leonard Carmichael, Tufts College; Prof. Walter S. Hunter, Brown University; Dr. Walter R. Miles, Yale University, representing the American Psychological Association; Prof. Carroll C. Pratt, Rutgers University, representing the Society of Experimental Psychologists; Dr. Dael L. Wolfe, University of Chicago, representing the Psychometric Society; and Prof. Robert M. Yerkes, Yale University.

*Science News Letter, January 18, 1941*

PSYCHOLOGY

# Plan Psychological Defense For America's Morale

**T**O KEEP up the spirits of the American people and save them from possible discouragement, panic, or demoralization in any future war of nerves, psychologists have mobilized their talents and are planning a psychological defense.

A recent gathering in Washington to study the "Psychological Factors in National Morale" brought together 20 leading psychologists and representatives from various agencies of the Government, it is revealed in the *Psychological Bulletin*, (December).

Research in this field is also attracting the attention of individual psychologists, another item in the same journal indicates.

Psychologists want to know what a year of peace-time compulsory military training or service will do to the attitudes of American youth. Will they be more or less militaristic? More or less patriotic? More or less inclined toward Fascism, Socialism, or Communism?

A before-and-after survey of opinion

among selectees will provide a scientifically-based answer to such questions to replace present guesses and speculations. Psychologists are urged to pool their efforts along such lines and coordinate their research through a special committee on "Morale in a Democracy" of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. Dr. Gardner Murphy of the College of the City of New York is chairman.

Among the scientific leaders taking part in the Morale Conference were Dr. Gordon W. Allport, social psychologist of Harvard University, who acted as chairman; Dr. J. R. Angell, educational counselor for the National Broadcasting Company; Prof. Ruth Benedict, anthropologist of Columbia University; Dr. R. A. Brotemarkle, of the University of Pennsylvania, who made a special study of morale during World War days; Dr. Harvey Cantril, student of radio and public opinion, Princeton; Dr. Leonard Carmichael, president of Tufts College

and director of the National Roster of Scientific and Specialized Personnel; Dr. Elmer Culler, of the University of Rochester; Dr. Leonard Dobb, Yale's Institute of Human Relations; Dr. H. B. English, Ohio State University; Dr. P. R. Farnsworth, University of Wisconsin; Dr. George H. Gallup, director of the American Institute of Public Opinion; Dr. Walter S. Hunter, Brown University;

Dr. J. G. Jenkins, University of Maryland; Dr. Rensis Likert, Bureau of Agricultural Economics; Dr. L. G. Lowrey, New York psychiatrist; Dr. W. R. Miles, Yale University; Dr. H. A. Murray, Harvard; Dr. G. A. Murphy, College of the City of New York; Dr. R. S. Woodworth, Columbia University; and Dr. R. M. Yerkes, Yale University.

*Science News Letter, January 13, 1941*

## PSYCHOLOGY

## Dangerous for Democracies to Imitate Dictator Propaganda

### Axis Propaganda Experts Base Their Methods on Assumptions Regarding "Mass Mind" Without Foundation

**D**ANGER is attached to imitating in democratic countries the propaganda methods of the dictator states, warns Prof. F. C. Bartlett, of the University of Cambridge, well-known British psychologist. His warning is contained in a new book, *Political Propaganda* (Cambridge University Press. *Reviewed, SNL this issue*).

Although specialists in political propaganda claim that their methods are based on special knowledge of the "psychology of the masses," actually, Prof. Bartlett declares, this knowledge turns out to consist in high-sounding generalizations for which there is not one scrap of experimental scientific evidence.

Propagandists of the dictator states express an unshakable belief that people in the mass exhibit "a childish, primitive, inferior, mean and altogether despicable intelligence."

Such an assumption, Prof. Bartlett has shown, is not necessary and would be wholly destructive of the very foundation of democracy.

The implication of the propagandist is that he arrogates to himself a superiority denied to others. Between him and his public, there is a great gulf and the widest part is in intelligence. Sometimes this claim is not just implied but is loudly asserted.

To this, Prof. Bartlett finds an answer in his research.

"It is now clear enough," he says, "that the distribution of intelligence is not markedly variable in any large group taken at random anywhere throughout the civilized world, and it is wildly improbable that any small group, not selected primarily and specifically for in-

telligence, should be, in fact, supreme in brain power.

"In particular, there is so far no political directing group anywhere which has been selected chiefly on a basis of intelligence, and there probably never can be, since in such a group other qualities, such as rapidity of decision, leadership, public spirit and a liking for responsibility, are at least equally important."

In a democracy, Prof. Bartlett urges, propaganda must be based on scientific

knowledge of the people and a desire to stimulate in them responses that will be to their benefit.

"It is almost unbelievably strange that society has, up to now, left the study of human factors almost wholly to speculation and to arm-chair analysis.

"Methods are, however, beginning to take shape which bid fair to set the investigation of such factors, and of the ways in which they operate upon a firmer and more scientific foundation.

"It may be a matter of life and death for the democracies of the world that these methods, whether in war or in peace, should be given the greatest possible encouragement and development."

"Mankind has resources and does not know how to use them, so that even large masses of people may be induced to believe the most extraordinary things about themselves just because they are said with tremendous emphasis and assurance by any self-styled authority.

"Muddle and disorder inevitably follow and will continue, until science is given as great an opportunity to investigate and understand the human mind as it has been and is being given to discover and direct the processes of the external world."

*Science News Letter, January 18, 1941*

According to tradition, Alexander the Great considered digging a canal at *Suez*, but feared the mouth would silt up.



#### NUCLEAR DISINTEGRATION

To illustrate atomic nuclear disintegration the Haverford College Department of Physics used this projection apparatus in the exhibit at the Philadelphia meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. William Harris, a student of the college, is shown working the machine.