

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.

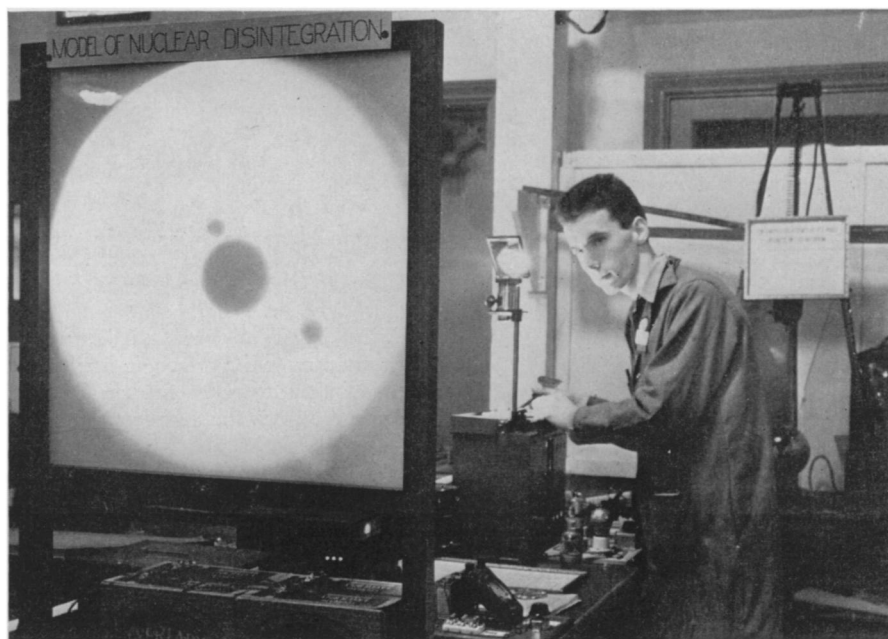
"It may be a matter of life and death for the democracies of the world that these methods, whether in war or in peace, should be given the greatest possible encouragement and development."

"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.