

PSYCHOLOGY

American Drinking Habits

The way we spend our leisure time determines the pattern of our drinking, study shows. The cocktail party is an American development.

► AMERICAN drinking is different than that of other nations, and the whole pattern of how we spend our leisure time is what makes it different, a sociologist has concluded.

Things like the pressure to wait for "next week's installment," to take a speedy auto trip on Sunday and the Hollywood "Super-colossal Production" are a part of this pattern. That is the finding of Prof. Herbert A. Bloch of St. Lawrence University, Canton, N. Y., writing in the journal, *THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR* (winter, 1948-1949).

There is hope that medical science can help the pathological or extreme drinker, but Mr. Bloch believes that most Americans will have their alcohol drinking habits altered only by changing their idea of how to spend their leisure time.

Restless excitement and craving for a change are American characteristics that have frequently been pointed out by Europeans, Dr. Bloch explains. He finds that this applies to American drinking habits as well as other features of our life.

The American, he says, drinks "with far greater intensity and zeal" than other national groups. The cocktail party is an American development, the sociologist points out. The cocktail, he notes, "employing as its base relatively inexpensive and low-grade gins, is relished in the spirit of the time-honored American vernacularism, because 'it gets you there quicker'."

Phrases used in connection with drinking in this country reveal the American zeal in drinking, Dr. Bloch says. He cites the cry to "catch up," heard by late-comers, as an example. Others include "Here's mud in your eye!" and "Down the hatch!" Dr. Bloch contrasts this approach to drinking with the Frenchman who sits all evening with his aperitif.

Another characteristic of American drinking is the relatively high percentage of drinks with concentrated alcoholic content, such as whiskey and gin, contrasted with beer or wines.

Behind these differences in the way Americans and other peoples drink lie the

tensions of our lives, Dr. Bloch suggests. Because our drinking habits are a part of the recreational pattern, he foresees no immediate success for reformers or any other efforts to change American drinking.

It might be changed, though, by working with what the American means by "having a good time," the sociologist urges.

Science News Letter, January 1, 1949

AGRICULTURE

Flight Air Pressure Found Harmless to Vegetables

► AIR-BORNE fresh fruits and vegetables stay fresh despite the sudden changes in air pressure involved in flying them to distant markets.

Tests made by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation of Burbank, Calif., in Lockheed's altitude chamber showed that if the temperature and humidity are controlled in flight, altitude changes do not damage the 34 different fruits and vegetables used in the experiments.

Science News Letter, January 1, 1949

ENGINEERING

Camera-Grinder Machine Reveals Porosity of Rock

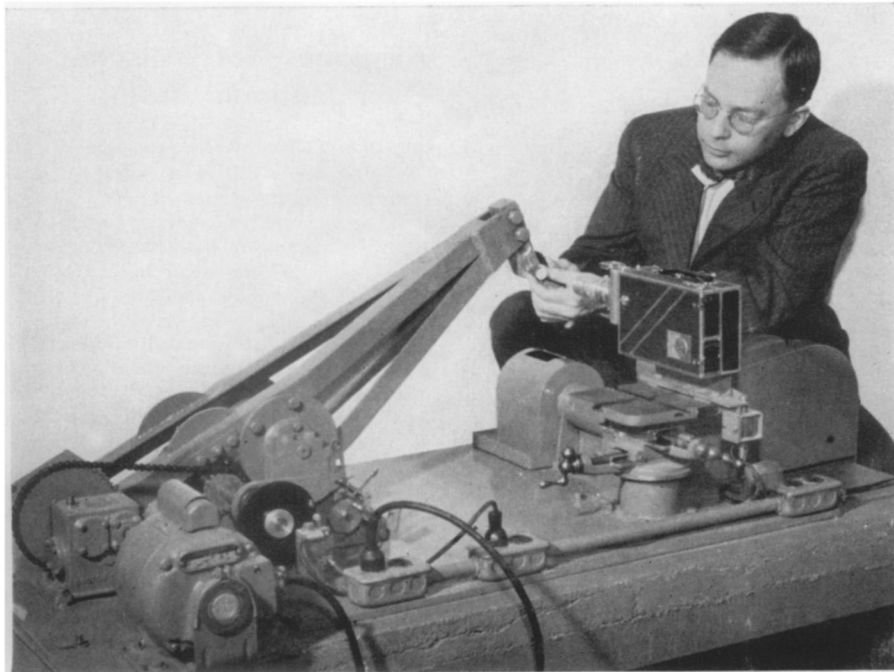
► A CAMERA and a grinder with a diamond grinding wheel give promise of helping the oil industry study rock from deep under the surface of the earth to find answers to the problem of how to get more oil out of the ground.

The combination is called a cinematome machine. With it, motion picture "tours" through the insides of the rock are taken. The rocks examined are samples of cores brought to the surface from drill holes. The pictures show their porosity. The grinder can cut slices of rock so thin that it would take 30 of them to be as thick as a newspaper page.

Most oil deposits are found in porous rock formation thousands of feet underground. But the oil can be produced only if there are enough tiny holes in the rocks, connected so that oil droplets may move through to the well bore. This device is adding to scientists' knowledge of rock and how oil moves through porous formation. It is expected to aid in the development of better ways of increasing oil-flow to the wells.

The cinematome is a development of Stanolind Oil and Gas Company of Tulsa, Okla., by Henry Schaefer of the company's production research department. The feeding of the rock into the grinder is automatic. With the help of an electric motor, the rock layer shaved away passes from the grinder into place in front of the camera. When its picture is taken on a motion picture film, it makes way for another sample.

Science News Letter, January 1, 1949



OIL-BEARING ROCKS—Core samples of rocks are placed in this Cinematome machine, then a diamond wheel grinds off a thin layer of the rock. A single frame picture is then taken of the rock face on colored motion picture film which will reveal to investigators the action of oil as it moves through underground rock formations.