

DEMOGRAPHY

Larger Families Wanted

► AMONG COUPLES where parenthood is perfectly planned, there is a tendency for the better off to want the most children. And young couples today want larger families than did the young people before World War II.

This is indicated on the basis of a survey made by a Princeton group of a sample of 100 young couples in Camden, N. J., who have already had their second baby. The survey was reported to the International Union for Scientific Study of Population meeting in Stockholm, Sweden.

The young couples studied were asked about their preferences on size of family. About equal numbers want a total of two, three and four children. Very few want more than four. The average is just a little over three. This is in sharp contrast to the size of family preferred by city dwellers before World War II.

Those who want just three children are those whose first two babies are of the same sex. Those with two girls want a third, hoping for a boy; those with two boys want

another because they hope to have a little girl.

The couples included in the study live in a large metropolitan area. All but nine reported that they use the rhythm method or some other form of contraception.

There is a tendency for more children to be wanted by the higher occupational, educational and income groups.

Couples who want the largest families are those who are happy in their work and marriage, who go to church frequently and have the least personal conflict or anxiety.

The survey was reported by Drs. Frank W. Notestein, Elliot G. Mishler, Robert G. Potter Jr., and Charles F. Westoff, of the Office of Population Research, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.

If all the white women in the United States who already have two children were to go on to have the number of children desired by this sample group, there would be no worry about their replacing themselves, the report indicates.

Science News Letter, August 31, 1957

MEDICINE

New Anti-Drinking Drug

► AN ANTI-DRINKING DRUG for alcoholics less violent in its reaction than presently used Antabuse has been found. The protection it gives alcoholics is reported in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (Aug. 1) by Dr. John D. Armstrong, University of Toronto, and medical director, Alcoholism Research Foundation.

Called CCC, short for citrated calcium carbimide, the new compound is still undergoing clinical trials but appears to cause less of such distressing side effects as drowsiness, skin rashes and impotence, which have sometimes been noticed with the older drug.

Both drugs cause the body to react more or less violently within minutes after the patient has taken an alcoholic drink. They produce headaches, a pounding heart, a feeling of chest constriction and possible loss of consciousness.

When Antabuse first came into use, it was thought that it would play a far greater role in curing alcoholism than it has been able to do, Dr. Armstrong reports.

Part of the drug's failure can be blamed on its unpleasantness although this is not the whole story.

The real value of both Antabuse and CCC lies in the alcoholic's knowing what will happen to him if he decides to start drinking again.

Neither of the drugs is perfect, although each has its own particular value. CCC is best for patients who have had bad side reactions with Antabuse or who want a milder-acting drug than Antabuse. On the other hand, there is a substantial group of alcoholics who lean toward the extremes and want the security of knowing that the

earlier drug will give them a severe reaction.

With CCC, sensitivity to alcohol occurs in a few hours, while with Antabuse it takes seven to ten days to be sure of an adequate reaction.

More research should be done to find a drug that would be reliable and would cause the alcoholic to vomit immediately after drinking. This type of drug would be preferable to both Antabuse and CCC, which cause potentially dangerous reactions in the blood system.

Science News Letter, August 31, 1957

PSYCHOLOGY

Army Studies Flickering Light as Combat Weapon

► THE EFFECT of flickering light as a possible military weapon against enemy troops was reported by Dr. L. M. N. Bach, professor of physiology at Tulane University, to a conference of Army and civilian scientists in New Orleans.

The studies were made by Tulane University under Army contract to see if the well-known distracting effects of flickering light could interfere with the mental ability of enemy troops.

The most disturbing effects come from white light at maximum brightness which is flickering at a rate of nine times per second, Dr. Bach said.

Subjects exposed to this kind of flickering reported such sensations as "falling asleep," "feel hypnotized," and "drowsy," but only two subjects actually fell asleep, he said. Women were hit the hardest by

the flickers, with headaches and feelings of nausea more common to them than they were to men.

In rifle-firing experiments, Dr. Bach reported, the flickering light could reduce the accuracy of opposing marksmen by as much as 50% if it were put behind the target, that is behind friendly troops. But experienced marksmen were only temporarily confused by it when firing at moving targets, and their scores soon returned to normal after an initial reduction.

On the whole, the research was not too productive. The sensations produced by the flickering light do interfere with mental function but apparently not enough to be effective.

The conference was sponsored jointly by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Laboratories, Fort Belvoir, Va., and Tulane University, New Orleans, La.

Associated with Dr. Bach in the studies were Drs. C. J. Sperry Jr. and J. T. Ray, also of Tulane University.

Science News Letter, August 31, 1957

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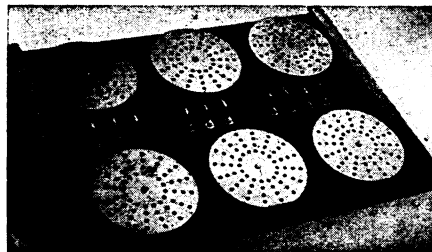
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