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A.S.T.M., 1960, Committee D-2 on
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**EPIDEMIOLOGY
OF MENTAL DISORDER**

**AAAS Symposium
Volume No. 60**

Edited by Benjamin Pasamanick

A symposium organized by the American Psychiatric Association to commemorate the centennial of the birth of Emil Kraepelin; cosponsored by the American Public Health Association.

. . . pioneering interdisciplinary studies by investigators from biostatistics, genetics, obstetrics, pediatrics, psychiatry, psychology, public health and sociology.

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traced not to the motives of the American people but to the motives of the people we send out to administer our foreign programs. We technicians may know how to work with people, but the administrators, mostly political appointees, know only how to work people in order that the sinecures garnered may be perpetuated. They survive chiefly because there are counterpart bureaucrats in the host country who have similar motives. The results are tragic both for the American taxpayer and for the natives he is trying to help. Another tragic consequence of the American political spoils system is the high regard native people begin to have for the Russian approach to their problems. This was described in the *New York Times* of 5 January 1960 by W. W. Kenworthy. He discussed the direct approach of setting up projects with specific objectives scaled to the understanding of the natives involved, as opposed to the grandiose million-dollars-be-damned approach of the Americans. The Russians try to impress the people affected; the Americans too often play to the politicians, whose prestige often depends upon how much they can squeeze out of Uncle Sam.

Instead of teaching people, I think we should merely allow them to learn at their own pace and in their own way. After all, as the people we want to help know so well, a way of life cannot be taught, it can only be lived.

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Man on the Moon

It has, apparently, been decided that we shall be remembered as the only nation in history that felt that it could spare \$9 billion—but could think of nothing better to do with it than to shoot it at the moon.

There has been remarkably little criticism of the proposal to put a man on the moon. Perhaps everyone is convinced that this is the supreme proof of our faith in science, and that it will be the final demonstration of our competence as scientists. It is not obvious, however, that science will, in the long run, benefit by being identified so closely with grandiose schemes whose real sponsors are the military hierarchy and the missile builders. Any layman or scientist should be able to name at least a hundred better ways to spend the money, and our more sophisticated friends abroad are apt to regard the project less as an affirmation

of national determination than as a declaration of intellectual bankruptcy.

Just as a timid suggestion, why not have the AAAS sponsor a contest in which each bright young graduate would list the ten best ways to spend \$1 billion.

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"Mad-Baiting"

The increasing interest in mental health these days seems to be associated with a rather significant, albeit comparatively unnoticed, political phenomenon—the phenomenon of "mad-baiting." There even seems to be some evidence of this phenomenon in the situation described in your "Mental health in the House Rules Committee" [*Science* 133, 1468 (12 May 1961)], even though the conclusions are certainly sound.

In "mad-baiting," scientific evaluation of ideas, and of disturbing ideas in particular, is avoided by labeling their promulgators "mad" or "disturbed." Sometimes technical diagnosis, often from afar, lend a veneer of scientific credibility to such *ad hominem* attacks on ideas. Instead of being soberly examined, ideas of this sort are then either ignored or else fought with blind fury, as though the devil himself had created them. Which response actually occurs in a given situation is likely to be determined much more by unthinking, popular attitudes, often prejudicially shaped by the mass media, than by the nature of the ideas themselves.

Scientific method demands, however, that ideas be carefully examined and soberly responded to on their own merits. Only after an individual's ideas have been repeatedly shown to be consistently wrong are we entitled to begin to question either his motives or his stability; even here, however, the term *sick* begs the basic question of whether the errors are accidental or, as with Adolph Hitler, deliberate lies.

Name-calling is an old political tactic. A new pseudoscientific veneer to either "mad-baiting" or "red-baiting" in these psychologically oriented days should not prevent us from recognizing its basically obfuscatory function, and its antidemocratic and antiscientific effect.

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