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GETTING BACK TO NORMAL

WE WERE GLAD TO LEARN that the Rockefeller Foundation has granted funds for an investigation of normal, happy people. For things have got to a point where a person with no quirks in his behavior is likely to be regarded as a dullard and a misfit.

Abnormality has come to be something of a social asset as well as a social problem. Neuroses have already passed allergies in the field of fashionable ailments and are now battling head and head with sinus trouble for the lead.

The dinner-party bore who used to describe his operation in great detail now gives you a play-by-play account of his psychoanalysis. It's even hard to find escape from these amateur Freuds at the movies. For likely as not you'll get a villain with a split personality on both ends of a double feature.

Normality and happiness may be the goal of psychiatric treatment. But too many psychologists and laymen seem so intent on finding baleful subconscious meanings in the most commonplace behavior that they forget what they are looking for. Or maybe they don't know what they are looking for.

So a big job for the Rockefeller researchers will be to try to define not only *who* is normal but *what* is normal. If and when they get that done, we hope they will give some thought to

divesting the abnormal of its morbid glamor. There is enough abnormality at best in these worrisome times without having uninformed laymen wondering whether the way they grind out a cigarette indicates a repressed wish to plant a heel in their mother-in-law's neck. It's time that we put a premium on well-adjusted behavior.

A lot of people need psychiatric help, and they should get it—from competent professionals. But we hope to see the day when such help is neither more smart nor more shameful than a tonsil operation. And we should like to see the whole business of treating abnormal behavior put on a businesslike and even a prosaic basis.

Maybe the researchers into normality will be able to accomplish this. They might even come up with some sort of abnormality-detecting machine, like the present lie detector, which would give us a new sort of vocational aptitude test. This could make life a lot pleasanter and safer by keeping people with homicidal tendencies out of barber college and people with Napoleonic delusions of grandeur out of public office.

The happy time may yet come when a congressman can be as proud of passing his normality test as he is of passing his loyalty test, and a dinner guest can admit without blushing that he doesn't know Sigmund Freud from Branch Rickey.

Tolerance Works Both Ways

DURING A WEEK when the knights of the white nightshirt were making their brutal forays in the South, the New York Post Home News, a professedly liberal newspaper, filled half its tabloid front page one day with this headline: **BIG BUSINESS ORDERED KLAN TERROR.**

The dispatch to which the headline was keyed told a considerably more qualified story. It stated that the attorney general of Alabama had told some Justice Department investigators that "orders for the floggings came from behind the mahogany desks of the big office buildings in Birmingham."

Granting the difficulty of compressing a story's meaning into a few words, that is a grossly misleading headline. Even if the story had offered names and proof to support the attorney general's statement, which it did not, it would be grossly misleading.

Even if the occupants of the chairs behind every mahogany desk in every Birmingham office building had commanded a platoon of masked thugs, there would still be no call for this general indictment.

The Post Home News knows the influence of a headline on the many who never read any farther. We wonder if the editor who approved the headline in question really believed that Birmingham's business leaders are the people that the hurried headline readers think of when they see the words Big Business.

The headline did more than distort the story. It was the kind of broadside that can promote class division and class hatred and encourage an unwarranted distrust of the American economic system.

In short, it was an example of the same smear tactics that the Post Home News crusades against vigorously when they happen to be used by its political opposites.

We can't see that it is any more admirable to assign evil character or intent to a whole economic group than to assign them to a whole racial or religious group. It is just as possible to be bigoted about a man's occupation as about his color.

Fair dealing and civil justice are not advanced when certain so-called liberal publications, in campaigning for those causes, forget that tolerance is a two-way street.

Housewife-Anguish?

A WOMAN NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST has made the morale-building suggestion that housewives be referred to henceforth as just plain wives.

"It isn't likely any woman feels a sense of inferiority in admitting she is a wife," the columnist reasoned. "So the part of the word that causes mental anguish must be the 'house.'"

This is the sort of feminine thinking that keeps men in a state of chronic bewilderment. The male innocently assumes that a woman's heart is gladdened if she can possess something that a lot of other women don't have. Then, at a time when houses are infinitely harder to get than husbands, he finds it isn't so. He is told that the implication that a woman can keep both house and spouse causes mental anguish.

Next he will probably learn that the mere mention of mink in connection with coat is enough to bring on a howling neurosis.

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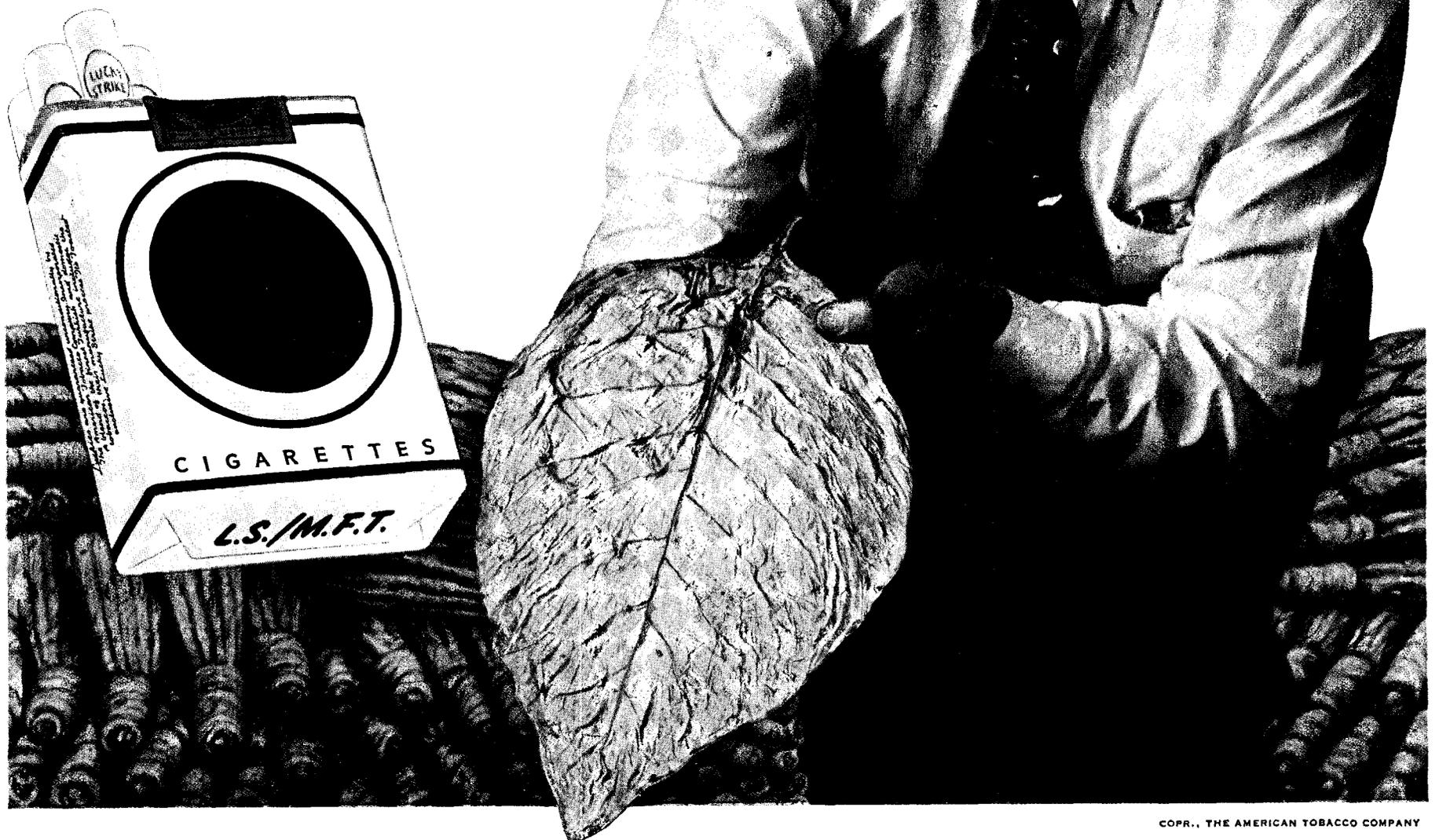
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