

## Psychopathic Terms Said Loosely Used By Medical Men

By DELOS SMITH  
UPI Science Editor

New York—The terms "psychopathic personality" and "psychopath" are being so loosely used both by medical men and the public that they're losing any meaning, an English psychiatrist complained in what may be the start of an international scientific argument.

Psychiatry might as well give up those terms and substitute "sociopath" because that's what a "psychopath" actually is—some one who disturbs normal social ways and thereby gets himself into trouble. Dr. Harold Palmer said in a recent lecture to a medical group.

**No Mental Disease**

A "psychopath" has no mental disease nor is he mentally deficient, said Palmer. Nevertheless, he "is seen by others to be more or less permanently awry and childlike in his behavior, in consequence of which he offends the social mores and sooner or later comes into sharp conflict with the established order."

Psychiatric science has yet to figure out anything really effective to do for psychopaths although trying to straighten them out in groups rather than individually seems to help.

But they don't seek help from psychiatry; nor do they accept it when it is offered or

forced upon them. "It is the neighbors who complain, and not the deviate himself," Palmer said.

Palmer specifically attacked the definitions of "psychopathic personality" approved by the American Psychiatric association. They include "so many diverse varieties, extending over such a wide range of inferiorities, instabilities, and anti-social tendencies as to render the expression useless," he said.

**Disagreeable Traits**

On the other hand, if you use the term narrowly and arbitrarily you "select such disagreeable traits as the excitable, the unstable, the impulsive, the perverse, the quarrelsome, the liar, and the swindler."

Yet and beyond question, there are "psychopaths" and psychopathic personalities," he said.

"At all times men have recognized the existence in their midst of inferior or inadequate folk, some of whom were especially vulnerable to mental disease," he said.

"Psychopathic personalities," in his view, are: Persons of apparently sound intellect who show no recognizable signs of any of the mental diseases and who act as "an irritant to and disrupt society, from which they both extrude themselves and are extruded."

## What Is The Law?

This column is prepared as a public service by the College of Law, Willamette University, Salem, to explain basic legal principles, not to provide legal advice. The reader is cautioned not to apply these cases to his own problems without an attorney's advice, for differing facts may change the outcome.

### Reason Must Be Used In Defending Another

A farmer employed a young man who was related to him by marriage. A neighbor, thinking the young man had told lies about him, hit the young man in the mouth. He threatened to hit him again and was about to do so when the farmer, who had warned the neighbor, struck the neighbor with the broadside of a pitchfork, breaking his arm.

The neighbor then started at the farmer who threatened to stick him with the pitchfork. The neighbor sued the farmer, seeking damages for the injuries suffered. The Kansas court held that the farmer had a right to defend his employee, if he acted reasonably. In this case, the court felt the farmer had acted reasonably.

### Privilege Usually Limited

The privilege to defend someone other than yourself has been usually limited to the defense of an employee or a relative in common law. Historically, it was a right arising in feudal times and vesting in the lord of the manor.

Some courts however, have held that even a stranger may be defended, if the circumstances are such that a reasonable man would interfere to protect him. In a New York case, the band leader, Cab Calloway was fighting with a member of his band. A woman in the audience went to the stage to try and separate them and Calloway turned and struck her, breaking her nose. She was awarded damages even though she did not know the person who she was attempting to defend.

### Courts Divided

The courts are divided on this question: must it be necessary to defend or just appear necessary? Some courts have taken the position that a person is privileged to use reasonable force even where he is mistaken in his belief that intervention is necessary. Other courts, however, have held that the intermeddler must run the risk that his intervention is necessary, and that the person he is defending would be privileged to defend himself.

In Oregon in 1951, the Supreme Court held that the right to defend others existed if a person can prove that the defense is reasonable under the circumstances. In that case, a young man was attacked and knocked down. The attacker was then going to "jump in the middle" of him. The young man's father-in-law intervened and hit the attacker with a metal chair causing the injuries complained of in the action. This was considered reasonable, under the circumstances.

## The Family Council

Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual report. The Family Council does not give advice; it merely reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

**James R.** — My problem is with my wife. We are in our mid-20s and have been married six years. We have a little girl of 5 and a baby son. My wife is a good mother and homemaker, but she worries too much about our little girl. She feels that Susan isn't big and strong enough for her age and can't fight back when other children hit her. My wife has gotten into many fights with our neighbors over Susan. It is true that some of these neighbors don't teach their kids to behave like human beings, but still we are stuck in our apartment here and must get along with these people.

I tell Margaret that she's got to begin to let the kid off on her own. Next year she'll be starting school and won't have Mommy to fight her battles.

**Margaret R.** — It's just because Susan will start school next year that I worry now and try to help her while I can. Susan is very tiny for her age, although the doctors says that she is in good health and growing nicely. But when she goes to school with all those big, rough kids she'll be lost if she gets into any sort of fight.

Jim doesn't realize how it hurts me to see that Susan won't even try to fight back when she is pushed around. I can't help bawling up and letting some of those neighbors and their kids have it.

I feel that Jim ought to defend me in these arguments with the neighbors. Instead he starts raging and ranting and blaming me for the whole thing. A real man would fight for his wife.

**The Council:** A woman who constantly gets into fights with her neighbors over the children is a pretty serious problem to herself and the children.

Margaret must try to recognize the facts — that her concern about Susan is ill-founded and she must come to terms with her own emotions if she wants her child to have a chance for a normal life.

The doctor says that this little girl is healthy and growing normally. That means that she is reasonably well-equipped to take care of herself.

But her mother takes the least sign of an aggressive gesture as a call to arms. Why? Well, we suspect that Margaret is the one who feels small, defenseless and helpless against the world. For some reason she is in a panic and feels that she must fight or the world will overwhelm her. She seeks to draw in her husband as her defender, but so far he has sensibly refrained from getting involved.

Margaret should try to be aware of the fact that she has developed a distorted picture of things. People are not against her or her child. On the contrary, it is she who looks for fights and manages to develop them out of nothing. If Margaret finds herself unable to deal with her irrational behavior she should consider the possibility of getting some psychiatric treatment. Her emotional disorder can grow into a fairly serious problem.

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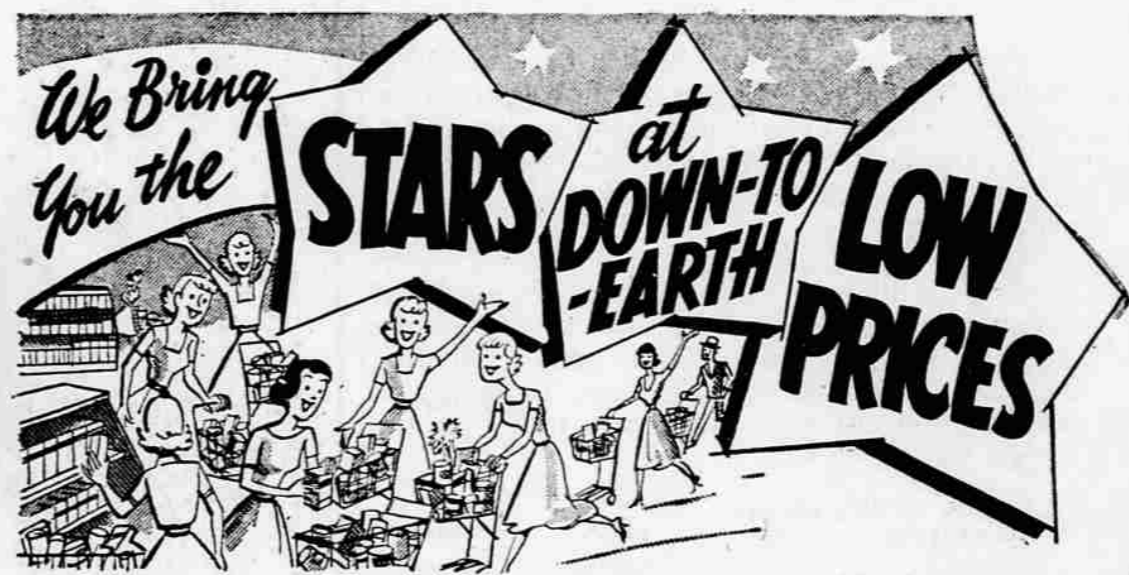
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