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## THE PROTEIN PROBLEM OF CHINA<sup>1</sup>

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### PROTEIN INTAKE

THE protein problem of China implicates the nutrition problem of China as a whole. Our experience in the Far East leads us to believe that in normal times the question of sufficient calories usually takes care of itself. That is to say, in a closed area or in a large agricultural country undisturbed by much industry, when the population pressure is in equilibrium with the food supply, it would appear that people live or die, depending upon whether the supply of calories is sufficient or not. This is one reason incidentally why the problem of nutrition in China is such a fascinating one for the food economist; the equilibrium is such a simple straightforward equilibrium with very few side reactions. But aside from calories the question of protein is probably the first qualitative factor

<sup>1</sup>Paper presented at a Symposium on the Biological Value of Proteins, at the Cleveland Meeting of the American Chemical Society, April 6, 1944.

of importance. Our first set of data published about twenty years ago indicates a protein intake of approximately 80 grams per capita per day,<sup>2</sup> which figure subsequent studies have confirmed as an average statement of the protein intake.

### THE RURAL DIET IS VEGETARIAN

A further accounting shows that about 95 per cent. of this average protein intake is derived from vegetable sources, while 5 per cent. is animal protein. One should hasten to explain that these figures are for the Chinese rural diet, which accounts for some 85 to 90 per cent. of the total population of the country. Please keep in mind that those who live in the more sophisticated centers, including those citizens of China whom we meet on the college campuses of this country, are accustomed to a dietary which approximates in character and variety that of the Occident.

<sup>2</sup>W. H. Adolph, *Jour. Home Econ.*, 17: 1, 1925.

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