

SCIENCE

VOL. 94

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1941

No. 2447

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SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKEEN CATTELL and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

Lancaster, Pa. Garrison, N. Y.
New York City: Grand Central Terminal
Annual Subscription, \$6.00 Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the Association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF VITAMINS¹

By Dr. ROBERT R. WILLIAMS

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THE theory of evolution has profoundly influenced the philosophical and religious thought of our generation as well as that of its predecessor. In alliance with the sciences of genetics and neurology it has shaped much of our thinking concerning the psychological and nervous organization of the human personality. At one time, especially under the influence of Herbert Spencer, the evolutionary concept had a profound influence upon theories of government and social organization. Perhaps it would not be going too far to say that the doctrine of *laissez-faire* had for a generation some of its main roots in the soil of

our views of the evolutionary process. In the present day of world-wide acceptance of planned economies and of various forms of paternalistic regimentation *laissez-faire* has become disreputable and scarcely any one is so poor as to do it reverence. Increasingly, popular thought classifies human social organization as a thing apart from nature, something to be dealt with as seems to us expedient.

Believing that it is a grave mistake to divorce any broad aspect of human life from its setting as a part of nature, I beg your indulgence to-day in departing from the shop talk of chemists, namely, chemical compounds and chemical reactions, and ask you to consider with me what man may learn from chemistry

¹ Lecture given on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the University of Chicago, September 22, 1941.

Science

94 (2447)

Science **94** (2447), 471-498.

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