

# SCIENCE

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<i>Social Implications of Vitamins</i> : DR. ROBERT R. WILLIAMS .....	471
<i>The Use and Misuse of Science in Government</i> : DR. A. V. HILL .....	475
<i>Obituary</i> : <i>William Albert Noyes</i> : DR. AUSTIN M. PATTERSON. <i>Mataro Nagayo</i> : DR. WARO NAKAHARA. <i>Deaths and Memorials</i> .....	477
<i>Scientific Events</i> : <i>Gifts and Bequests to New York University; The New Hall of Ethnology of the Museum of New Mexico; The New York Museum of Science and Industry and the Henry R. Towne Endowment Fund; The New York Meeting of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers; Resignation of Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews as Director of the American Museum of Natural History; Medals of the Royal Society</i> .....	480
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i> .....	483
<i>Discussion</i> : <i>The Polarization of Atmospheric Haze</i> : PROFESSOR HANS NEUBERGER. <i>Some Effects of Binocular Vision</i> : FRANCIS H. ALLEN. <i>The Obligation of the Universities</i> : PROFESSOR CARL EPLING .....	485
<i>Special Correspondence</i> : <i>Physics in Pre-Nazi Germany</i> .....	488
<i>Quotations</i> : <i>The Nutrition Society</i> .....	489
<i>Scientific Books</i> : <i>The Harvard Books on Astronomy</i> : PROFESSOR CHARLES H. SMILEY. <i>Calculus of Extension</i> : PROFESSOR ERNEST P. LANE .....	490
<i>Societies and Meetings</i> : <i>The Section of Psychology of the American Association for the Advancement of Science</i> : PROFESSOR ARTHUR W. MELTON .....	493
<i>Special Articles</i> : <i>Purification of the Virus of Mouse Encephalomyelitis</i> : DR. S. GARD and DR. K. O. PEDERSEN. <i>The Carcinogenic Effect of Methylcholanthrene and of Tar on Rabbit Papillomas Due to a Virus</i> : DR. PEYTON ROUS and DR. WILLIAM F. FRIEDEWALD. <i>Polyphenolase Activity as a Primary Cause in Darkening of Boiled Potatoes</i> : PROFESSOR W. E. TOTTINGHAM and CARL O. CLAGETT .....	493
<i>Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods</i> : <i>A Colorimetric Test for Vitamin K<sub>1</sub></i> : DR. FILDALFO IRREVERRE and DR. M. X. SULLIVAN. <i>Concentration of Enzymes and Other Biological Colloids by Dialysis</i> : DR. GUY E. YOUNGBURG .....	497
<i>Science News</i> .....	8

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## SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF VITAMINS<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. ROBERT R. WILLIAMS

CHEMICAL DIRECTOR, THE BELL TELEPHONE LABORATORIES

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

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

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