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VITAMINS IN OUR FOOD¹

By Professor A. E. MURNEEK

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My appearance on this program, I wish to assure you, is not of my choice. I am the object of a well-established punishment to those who have been "honored" due to previous servitude and an annual or perennial display of the older folks for the amusement or encouragement of the younger generation.

The particular subject, however, is of my selection in order to fit into the general program of "Nutrition—Some Current Views." Vitamins must have gained an alarming popularity, when a non-specialist, like myself, desires to discuss them before a group of assorted specialists. Plants and vitamins, however, are so closely linked that, as a horticulturist and plant physiologist, I, too, have been obliged to deal with

them more intimately—the "little things" in nutrition that now count so much. If in this discussion I may be unduly critical, kindly forgive me by ascribing it to no greater fault than that due to emotional simplification, personal prejudice or perchance conservatism come with age. In agreement with Thorstein Veblen, I do not wish to criticize but merely to understand. If disparagement is involved in this quest for certainty, I hope for your graciousness.

DEMONSTRATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF VITAMINS

According to an older definition, a vitamin is a catalytic substance indispensable in animal or human nutrition. It can not be synthesized in their organisms but must be obtained from plants. Now we know that all plants, likewise, require certain vitamins and that many of them are heterotrophic, must obtain their vitamins from an external source. This certainly is

¹ Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of Section O (Agriculture), read before the joint meeting of Sections O and G (Botany) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Cleveland, Ohio, September 14, 1944.

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