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MISINTERPRETATION AND MISUSE OF THE RECOMMENDED DIETARY ALLOWANCES

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ALMOST four years have elapsed since the Table of Recommended Dietary Allowances (Table 1) was developed by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council.² In this period the table has served, as was intended, as a guide for good dietary planning in civilian life and in the armed services. Also, however, the table has been misused. Criticism of the so-called liberality of the recommendations is partly referable to such misuse.

In developing its recommendations the board was guided by evidence of three types. There were data

¹ Past chairman, at present vice-chairman, Food and Nutrition Board, National Research Council.

² Food and Nutrition Board, National Research Council. "Recommended Dietary Allowances." Reprint and Circular Series, National Research Council 115, January, 1943, pp. 6.

respecting requirements obtained from experimentation with human subjects who subsisted on diets of predetermined composition. There was a considerable accumulation of information obtained in experiments with animals. There was much experience to indicate that all biologic standards exhibit a range of variation within zones of apparent normality, suggesting that recommendations of allowances of any nutrient, to be applicable to an entire population, would need to provide not for an average individual but for those normal persons whose requirements can be expected to exceed the average.

Misuse of the Table of Recommended Dietary Allowances has been based in part on the false assumption that failure of a diet—any diet—to provide the nutrients in the table in the quantities recommended

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