

THE COCONUT

The Role Of Coconut In Our National Defense

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MODERN war as well as modern defense involve mobilization of the entire population and adjustment of the whole economic structure of the nation. Since food is a vital element in the lives of people, proper nutrition is therefore of paramount importance in the defense program of any nation.

It is now acknowledged by military strategists that the value of food as a vital factor in life is much more significant in times of war than in time of peace. The need for a well fed army requires no argument. To be strong and sturdy the soldier must be well nourished. In times of emergency it is equally important that the civilian population should be well fed to maintain the morale. A diet, therefore, consisting of local materials which will offer the essential requirements but at a cost within the reach of the poor people should be sought by the government.

According to the latest statistics, we are importing a monthly average of 3,247,896 kilos of vegetables and 1,231,495 kilos of fruits and nuts. This volume must be reduced if not actually avoided. Ours is a tropical country where vegetables and fruits grow easily and luxuriantly all year around. We have a fruit grown abundantly in this beautiful isles rightly called the "fruit of life". This fruit is coconut and is entirely neglected by many of our people. I am not going to speak of the several uses of coconut for war purposes. Because of the limited time at my disposal I shall limit myself to say a few words on the food value of the coconut.

Human being requires for satisfactory nutri-

tion and growth air (oxygen), water and food. The food that we consume must contain the following factors:— proteins, fats, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins.

The Mineral and Vitamin Content of the Coconut

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It is surprising how little work has been done in the Philippines on the nutritive value of the coconut. Some investigations, however, are in progress at the present time. As a source of minerals, the coconut contains an appreciable amount of phosphorous, a smaller amount of calcium and a very small amount of iron (1). According to the work of some investigators, the young coconut or "buko" is slightly higher in these minerals than the mature coconut (1). The availability of these minerals to the human body when they are furnished by the coconut is still unknown.

Coconuts also contain a small amount of some of the vitamins. Investigators have reported the presence of vitamin B₁ and riboflavin in the coconut. Analysis also show that some vitamin C is found in the water of the green nut having soft pulp (2), (3), (4). The juice of the coconut palm is higher in vitamin

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The kernel of the coconut contains all three of the major constituents namely, protein, fats and carbohydrates, though it is not equally good source of all of them.

By special process, it has been found possible to extract the protein from coconut in a pure form. This protein is valuable in animal and human nutrition. Unlike a number of plant proteins, (such as those of corn and barley) that of the coconut is fairly satisfactory. Studies in America have shown that the globulin fraction of the proteins of coconut produces normal growth when used as the sole source of protein in an otherwise complete diet.

But the coconut's highest contribution to human and animal nutrition is its oil or fat. Among many other val-

ues, coconut oil has been found to be the most easily digestible of all the edible fats in general use, and that margarine made from this oil is more readily digested even than butter. Recent work on the rate of digestion of fats by Miss Hartwell of King's College, London, seems to corroborate the above view. Coconut oil may prove a more valuable food than has hitherto been supposed. Coconut oil as a source of fat in the diet is more satisfactory than other fats in economizing vitamins E and B₁.

Estimates from various sources indicate that

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