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EUGENICS IN NEW ZEALAND

1900 - 1940

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Philip J. Fleming

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ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
ER	Eugenics Review
NZPD	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
ODT	Otago Daily Times

## INTRODUCTION

From approximately 1900 social workers, doctors, biologists and legislators throughout the Western world began in increasing numbers to direct their attention to eugenics, an applied 'science' which aimed at improving the genetic potentialities of the human species. As the new creed gained respect and as individuals, many of them in the front-line of the health and social services, sought an explanation for society's ills and a means of curing them, eugenic societies sprung up in many countries, assuming a different character wherever they took root.

This thesis is a history of eugenics in New Zealand and it traces the development of eugenic thought from the early years of the twentieth century through to the 1930s when the subject experienced a brief revival of interest. By this time, however, eugenics had been deserted by the scientific establishment, who now realized that much of earlier eugenics propaganda was little more than unsubstantiated prejudice, and the creed was soon to be irreparably discredited by the demonstration of perverted eugenics in Nazi Germany. In tracing the history of eugenics in New Zealand attention is directed to the work of local writers on eugenics, to the role of politicians and to the activities of the New Zealand Eugenics Education Society. The Society was formed in Dunedin in 1910, three years after its parent body had been established in London, but despite the formation of other branches in Wellington, Christchurch and Timaru, the local Society persisted for less than four years. Interest in eugenics, at least in certain sectors of the population, remained high, however, and its role in a variety of issues which arose during the 1920s is examined. This agitation culminated in the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders and, four years later, the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. In discussing the revival of interest in eugenics during the 1930s a case study of discussion on the subject in the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union offers an insight into the mechanics of agitation and the issues raised by the topic.

Before embarking upon a study of the history of eugenics in New Zealand it is essential to briefly examine the origins of eugenic thought and note its major characteristics. This is especially important since New Zealand's eugenists were, in general, content to base their arguments on overseas literature and since these arguments have been discussed only briefly in the text so as to avoid repetition.

The essential aim of eugenics, to maintain or improve the genetic quality of the human species, must have suggested itself to man as soon as he began to reflect on his destiny. To Plato it had seemed only logical

that the best of both sexes ought to be brought together as often as possible, the worst as seldom as possible, and that we should rear the offspring of the first, but not the offspring of the second, if our herd is to reach the highest perfection.<sup>1</sup>

The development of eugenics proper was, however, closely linked with discoveries in the late nineteenth century which fundamentally changed scientists' understanding of man's relationship to nature and of the mechanism of genetic inheritance.<sup>2</sup>

The name which immediately comes to mind in this regard is Charles Darwin and although Darwin's discoveries were mirrored by those of several other scientists, the attention directed to the notion that man was part of the natural world and was subject to its laws was essential to the development of eugenics. Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin and the father of eugenic thought, noted in 1883 that the doctrine of evolution "suggests an alteration in our mental attitude, and imposes a new moral duty ... an endeavour to further evolution".<sup>3</sup> Ten years after Darwin had published his Origin of Species in 1859 Galton entered print with Hereditary Genius. An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences and this was followed in 1883 by his Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development. It was this work, in which the word 'eugenics' was used for the first time, which signalled the birth of eugenic thought proper and the new creed rapidly gained momentum as genetic research aroused excitement and optimism about the practical application of this new-found knowledge.

During the 1880s the work of the German biologist August Weismann revealed that there was a clear distinction between germ cells, which controlled reproduction, and body, or somatic, cells. The acceptance of this discovery entailed a rejection of the Lamarckian view that acquired

<sup>1</sup> A.D. Lindsay (trans.), Plato's Republic, London, 1935, p.149.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller discussion of the scientific background to eugenics see G.R. Searle, Eugenics and Politics in Britain 1900-1914, Leyden, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> F. Galton, Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development, (1883), London, 1908. Reprint, p.220.

characteristics could be inherited and was thus "a major episode on the road to the acceptance of eugenics"<sup>4</sup>. This acceptance of Weismann's discovery was of particular importance with regard to one group in society: the 'unfit'. Defining this class of humanity, whose gradual extinction was the ultimate aim of all eugenicists, Major Leonard Darwin, an important figure in the English eugenics movement, noted that "there are many kinds of men that we do not want. These include the criminal, the insane, the imbecile, the feeble in mind, the diseased at birth, the deformed, the deaf, the blind, etc"<sup>5</sup>.

The theory of the integrity of the germ-plasm, that is that genetic characteristics remained unchanged, had two far-reaching implications. It meant that unless action was taken the 'unfit' would always be present, a millstone around the neck of society and, it was believed, a prolific source of crime, immorality, alcoholism and disease. It also meant that money spent on rehabilitating the criminal, the poor and the infirm was being wasted. Although the individual defective might be reformed through education, better housing or health care the process of rehabilitation would have to begin anew with each new generation, all of whom would bear the taint of heredity. Karl Pearson, the first incumbent of the chair in eugenics at London University, which was established under the terms of Francis Galton's will, commented

Education for the criminal, fresh air for the tuberculous, rest and food for the neurotic - these are excellent, they may bring control, sound lungs, and sanity to the individual; but they cannot save the offspring from the need of like treatment nor from the danger of collapse when the time of strain comes. They cannot make a nation sound in mind and body, they merely screen degeneracy behind a throng of averted degenerates.<sup>6</sup>

Eugenics thus focussed attention on heredity and public education on the primacy of heredity in deciding the moral, intellectual and physical quality of future generations was a major role of societies like the New Zealand Eugenics Education Society. This does not mean, however, that eugenicists ignored the role played by environment. Among the people of many differing viewpoints who comprised the eugenics movement were many who

4 M.H. Haller, Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought, New Brunswick, 1963, p.61.

5 L. Darwin, What is Eugenics?, London, 1929, p.25.

6 R.J.J. Hawkes, What is Eugenics? A Plea for Racial Improvement, Christchurch, 1911, p.5.

were willing to grant a greater role to environment than eugenics theory deemed proper. If such ambiguity was common, eugenics orthodoxy suggested that heredity was five to ten times more important than environment in determining racial destiny and a booklet published by the New Zealand Eugenics Education Society commented that "At the worst environment can kill us, but at the best it can never turn bad into good."<sup>7</sup>

This crude hereditarianism was buttressed by case studies which sought to illustrate the overwhelming importance of heredity and the financial burden imposed by the fertility of the 'unfit'. Oft-quoted were two studies by R.L. Dugdale and H.H. Goddard, both Americans. In 1875 Dugdale released the results of his investigations into a group of families to whom he gave the pseudonym 'Jukes' and who traced their ancestry back to a solitary degenerate named Max. Among 709 of Max's descendents, it was alleged, could be found 76 convicted criminals, 128 prostitutes, 18 brothel keepers and over 200 paupers. This was followed in 1912 by H.H. Goddard's similar study of a group of families whom he called the 'Kallikaks' and whose tainted heredity, it was claimed, could be traced back to one figure, 'Old Horror', who was born during the American Revolution. 'Old Horror's' progeny were no less notorious than Max's and with an enviable ability to probe the moral, intellectual and physical characteristics of those long deceased, Goddard noted that his 480 known descendants included 143 feeble-minded, 24 alcoholic, 26 illegitimate, 3 criminals and 33 prostitutes and sexually immoral individuals.<sup>8</sup>

These defectives shared two common characteristics - they were costly to support and they were alarmingly prolific. While the 'superior' classes were restricting the size of their families, the 'unfit', it was believed, were multiplying rapidly and thus constituted a "treacherous disease"<sup>9</sup> which threatened to overturn civilization unless action was taken to restrict their fertility. The apparent urgency of the situation was aggravated by the belief that it was the heavy burden of taxation which the support of the 'unfit' necessitated which was discouraging the 'superior' classes from raising large families. The eugenicists' solution to the situation comprised two approaches: positive eugenics, which sought to encourage 'fit' couples to have children, and negative eugenics, which concentrated on ways of

7 ibid., p.6.

8 See T. Dobzhansky, Heredity and the Nature of Man, London, 1964, pp.52-3.

9 Darwin, p.68.

restricting the fertility of the 'unfit'.

It was this second approach which attracted most eugenisists' attention and the means of achieving this end included segregation, sterilization and marriage certificates. Segregation was the means favoured by the Eugenics Education Society which was founded in London in 1907 as a rival to the Eugenics Laboratory. Not only did segregation offer an apparently effective means of preventing the reproduction of the unfit, it avoided controversy on the subject of sterilization and allowed eugenists to hide their fear of defectives behind words of care and compassion for them. To be effective, however, segregation would need to be for a lengthy period of time covering the reproductive years and would hence prove extremely expensive. Expense was thus the major virtue of eugenic sterilization, whether compulsory or voluntary, since once treated the 'unfit' could be allowed to earn their own living in the community. The major evidence of the effects of eugenic sterilization came from the United States where in 1907 the Indiana State Legislature had legalized the operation of vasectomy for confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles and rapists in public institutions when it was recommended by a board of experts. By 1914 Indiana's example had been followed by fifteen other states including California where over the next two decades most of the sterilization operations were actually performed. Although English eugenists tended to reject sterilization as an example of crude and excessive Americanism,<sup>10</sup> this surgical solution to society's ills was, as we shall see, frequently mooted by those concerned at New Zealand's apparently rising tide of defectives.

Briefly outlined like this eugenics appears to owe much to social Darwinism and one commentator has suggested that eugenics represents "the most enduring aspect of social Darwinism."<sup>11</sup> Both creeds lamented the ill effects of misapplied charity and both called for a "beneficent purging of the social organism".<sup>12</sup> If eugenics offered a refined form of social Darwinism, it is crucial to note that there were important differences between the two ideologies. While social Darwinists saw society's salvation

<sup>10</sup> Searle, p.94.

<sup>11</sup> R. Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought, Boston, 1955, p.161.

<sup>12</sup> D. Fleming, "Social Darwinism", in A.M. Schlesinger and M. White (Eds.), Paths of American Thought, London, 1964, p.125.

in a return to individualism and laissez-faire policies, eugenicists realized that natural selection was no longer operable and called, instead, for rational selection. Eugenics acknowledged that the poor and the diseased could not be left to die as they had in earlier times but it demanded that man's pity should be guided by reason. To admit that the defective had a right to live, eugenicists argued, did not mean that he had a right to hand on his tainted heredity to future generations. In 1923, for example, a New Zealand doctor, P.C. Fenwick, noted that

We are carefully conserving the life of every Mental Degenerate, Lunatic, Epileptic, Deaf-mute or person affected with incurable disease. This is no doubt right and our duty to humanity, but we are permitting these unfortunate people to increase and multiply and to hand down to future generations the dreadful burden of heredity [sic] disease, without the slightest attempt to save our country from a degenerating population.<sup>13</sup>

Eugenics also differed from social Darwinism in its acknowledgement of the need for state intervention and for social solidarity. The threat of degeneracy, it was suggested, was so strong that something more than individual action was required. As the guardian of the racial and the national interest the state had a duty to stem the tide of degeneracy and in this endeavour individuals were expected to make sacrifices for the sake of future generations. For those of the 'fit' classes this meant that couples must forgo luxury and social advancement in order to have large families and for the 'unfit' the welfare of the race, it was claimed, demanded a renunciation of parenthood.

Retracing the history of eugenics in New Zealand it is easy to be shocked by the beliefs which many of the country's leading politicians, doctors and academics subscribed to. It is equally easy, perhaps, to laugh at these beliefs. To do so, however, is not only to deny the important role which these beliefs played in shaping the thoughts and actions of an influential section of the community - it is to deny the

<sup>13</sup> Memo from Dr Fenwick to the Hospital Committee in North Canterbury Hospital Board to the Minister of Health, July 23, 1923, Hospital Boards: General, Proposed Treatment of Mental Degenerates, H54/79.

relevance of the issues which the study of this subject raises. In a time when genetic engineering is becoming a disturbing reality, when the welfare state is under threat and when the rights of the handicapped are attracting widespread attention, these issues are still worthy of discussion and debate.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Ms. M.A. Tennant, Professor W.H. Oliver and Dr A.R. Grigg of Massey University for their helpful advice and comments during the year. I would also like to acknowledge the obliging service rendered by the staff of the Massey University, Alexander Turnbull and General Assembly Libraries. Thanks are also due to the staff of National Archives and to Mr Frank Rogers for his friendly help and advice.

CHAPTER ONE

## BEGINNINGS

Notwithstanding the development of civilising, Christianising, and educational institutions, crime, insanity, and pauperism are increasing with startling rapidity. The true cause is to be found deep down in biological truth. Society is breeding from defective stock. The best fit to produce the best offspring are ceasing to produce their kind, while the fertility of the worst remains undisturbed.

W.A. Chapple, The Fertility of the Unfit.

In tracing the history of eugenic thought in New Zealand it becomes evident that this important facet of our social history was a reflection of wider issues and concerns. To understand the wide currency that eugenics enjoyed in certain sectors of the population during the first three decades of the twentieth century, then, it is essential to place it within the context of contemporary thought and to determine its antecedents.

Throughout this period New Zealand's population was seen as a small but important component of the British Empire. That the country's fate was inextricably bound up with that of the Empire was assumed by practically all. Consequently, eugenists were, for the most part, content to base their arguments on data derived from the situation in the Mother Country (and to a lesser extent on data from the United States) rather than on local evidence. New Zealand's problems were England's problems and vice versa, England's problems were New Zealand's also. Eugenics was a reflection of the wider concern with the future of the Empire, a concern based on the neo-Darwinian beliefs which saw the white civilized races pitted against the rapidly multiplying hordes from the East. The preservation of the Empire, and hence of civilization, depended on meeting the challenge from the East, a task which made it essential that the Empire confront the threat from within: the 'unfit'. Racial fitness assumed importance, then, because of the widespread belief in the struggle for survival between nations and so eugenics must be seen, at least in part, as a response to the perceived challenge which also led to the inauguration of school cadets, the formation of the Society for Promoting the Health of Women and Children in 1907 and the frequently voiced alarm at the country's declining birth rate.

If it is important to place the study of eugenics within the wider context, it is also essential to recognize the danger of adopting too wide a definition of eugenics. In particular, one must take cognizance of the ambiguities and apparent contradictions of thought which occurred within the eugenics movement. The example of Truby King, founder of the Society for Promoting the Health of Women and Children is a valuable case in point.<sup>1</sup> King's endeavour to face the threat of the East and of disorder within society could be loosely seen as evidence of eugenic concern and King was a

<sup>1</sup> See E. Olsen, "Truby King and the Plunket Society. An Analysis of a Prescriptive Ideology," New Zealand Journal of History, Vol.15, No.1 (April 1981), pp.3-23.

member of the Wellington council of the Eugenics Education Society. At the same time, however, King had obvious doubts about the movement and voiced his opposition to some aspects of eugenics on several occasions.

At the annual meeting of the Dunedin branch of the Society for the Health of Women and Children in 1911 he expressed his apprehension at the effect of the widespread belief in the primacy of heredity and his fear that it might lead to fatalism and neglect of child-care. He presented, instead, the view "that environment was 10 times as important as heredity"<sup>2</sup>, a view palpably erroneous to both eugenists and contemporary scientific opinion. King's concern at the "disquieting effect"<sup>3</sup> of public acceptance of the theory of integrity of the germ plasm was again voiced at the Australasian Medical Congress held in Auckland in 1914. This acceptance, he feared, meant that "one of the strongest incentives to physical and mental fitness tends to be removed"<sup>4</sup>. Instead, he suggested that it was possible to hand on a general condition of fitness or unfitness to succeeding generations and to thus "knock heredity into a cocked hat."<sup>5</sup> In the ensuing discussion King repeated a statement by an eminent English doctor that the public were presently hypnotized by 'pseudo-science' and he supported the observation by W.A. Holman, Premier of New South Wales, that eugenics represented "an illustration of biology run to seed in certain directions"<sup>6</sup>. King's ambivalence on the subject remained, however - an ambivalence manifest in his observation that "Even children born in the asylums were mostly all right, though, of course, he strongly deprecated procreation of the unfit"<sup>7</sup>.

Halliday<sup>8</sup> argues for making social Darwinism and eugenics synonymous and so if one is looking for the antecedents of the New Zealand eugenics movement one must look back to the 1890s. In the decade before the turn of the century fully developed social Darwinism had reached New Zealand's shores and can be detected in the statements of Duncan MacGregor and Robert Stout.<sup>9</sup> In 1876 MacGregor, then Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and Political Economy at the University of Otago, entered print

2 ODT, May 31, 1911, p.5.

3 Australasian Medical Congress. Transactions of the Tenth Session held in Auckland, New Zealand, February, 1914, Wellington, 1916, p.82.

4 ibid., p.82.

5 ibid., p.83.

6 ibid., p.90.

7 ibid., p.95.

8 R.J. Halliday, "Social Darwinism: A Definition", Victorian Studies, Vol. XIV, No. 4 (June 1971), pp.389-405.

9 See C.B.K. Smithyman, "Attitudes to Immigration in New Zealand 1870-1900", M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1971, p.190.

to attack society's "unreasoning dread of encroaching on the liberty of the subject".<sup>10</sup> "We must not", he warned, "allow the sacred name of liberty to be any longer a barrier to progress. The drunkard, the criminal, and the pauper, after a certain point are not fit for liberty, which they can only abuse, to the great injury of society".<sup>11</sup> Instead, he prophesied, "The time is coming when the law must extend its definition of insanity, so as to include hopeless drunkards, hopeless criminals, and hopeless paupers, adjudged to be such after a sufficient number of trials and failures. They must be made to work for their support, and deprived of liberty until they die, in order to prevent their injuring society either by their crimes or by having children to inherit their curse".<sup>12</sup> MacGregor's appointment as Inspector-General of Hospitals and Charitable Aid in 1886 gave him an ideal platform from which to warn his fellow countrymen, about the evils of "lavish and indiscriminate, outdoor relief" and of the "subsidized propagation of the unfit".<sup>13</sup>

Not surprisingly, MacGregor's statements were being used well into the twentieth century by those who sought to argue the case for eugenics. MacGregor's influence was also seen in the thought of one of his first students, Robert Stout. This disciple of Spencer, whose propagandist activities in the service of the cause earned praise from the Master himself<sup>14</sup> was a firm believer in the existence of a criminal class and in the dangers of race degeneration. It was this concern, no doubt, that led him to become an officeholder in the Eugenics Education Society. Like many who professed a belief in eugenics, however, his speeches also reveal an ambivalence and reluctance to give himself wholly to a rigidly fatalistic belief in heredity. Hence he never gave up his faith in the salvation offered to the race by education and self-improvement.<sup>15</sup>

In 1928 the Eugenics Review lauded New Zealand as "the first Dominion seriously to consider sterilization",<sup>16</sup> a statement the factual basis of which

10 D. MacGregor "The Problem of Poverty in New Zealand" [Part III], New Zealand Magazine, Vol.1, No.3 (July 1876), p.320.

11 *ibid.*, p.320.

12 *ibid.*, p.320.

13 Annual Report on Hospitals and Charitable Institutions of the Colony, AJHR, 1898, H -22, p.4.

14 See D.A. Hamer, "The Law and the Prophet: A Political Biography of Sir Robert Stout (1844-1930)", M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1960, p.76.

15 See R. Stout, "Our Waifs and Strays", The Melbourne Review, Vol.X, No.38 (April 1885), p.120.

16 ER, Vol. XX, No. 3 (October 1928), p.156.

is unclear. In tracing the intellectual history of this surgical solution to society's ills, however, the year 1903 is undoubtedly important. In this year the New Zealand born surgeon and politician W.A. Chapple unleashed on his fellow countrymen The Fertility of the Unfit, a work which has been justly described as "a hair-raising book".<sup>17</sup> More disturbing than Chapple's call for eugenic sterilization was the apparent acceptance of it by leading political figures. J.G. Findlay, in a letter to the author published in the text, suggested that "no finer work on the subject has been accomplished than that contained in your Treatise".<sup>18</sup> Another apparent admirer was the Chief Justice, Sir Robert Stout, who expressed pleasure with the work and offered his assistance in having it published in the United Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

In the book Chapple set forth eugenics orthodoxy, attributing the "startling" increase in crime, insanity and pauperism to the fact that society was breeding from "defective stock".<sup>20</sup> The situation was aggravated he claimed, not only by "pauperising charitable aid",<sup>21</sup> alcohol and the stress of modern life, but also by the differential birth rate. "Men and women reason out", he claimed "that they cannot bear all the burdens that the State imposes upon them, support an increasing army of paupers, and lunatics and defectives, and non-producers, and that luxuriously, and at the same time incur the additional burden of rearing a large family".<sup>22</sup> Since a common characteristic of all defectives was the inability to restrain their desires (especially sexual ones) much of the book constituted a reprimand to the 'fit' classes for limiting their family size. The matter however was one not only for individual response — it was also one for government response.

If the 'fit' were to return to their important role as breeders it was essential that they did not have to bear the burden of the rapidly multiplying 'unfit' and Chapple asserted that "It has become the most pressing duty of the State ... to declare that the procreation of the unfit shall cease, or at least, that it shall be considerably curtailed and placed among the vanishing evils, with a view to its final extinction".<sup>23</sup> Chapple

17 Searle, p.111.

18 W.A. Chapple, The Fertility of the Unfit, Melbourne, 1903, p.v.

19 *ibid.*, p.vi.

20 *ibid.*, p.xv.

21 *ibid.*, p.79.

22 *ibid.*, p.80.

23 *ibid.*, p.98.

confidently stated that the burden of life would be lessened by one-third if the fertility of defectives could be stopped<sup>24</sup> and his was an alarmingly wide definition of the racially unfit. "The unfit in the State", he announced, "include all those mental and moral and physical defectives who are unable or unwilling to support themselves according to the recognized laws of human society. They include the criminal, the pauper, the idiot and the imbecile, the lunatic, the drunkard, the deformed and the diseased"<sup>25</sup>. Having rejected vasectomy because of its alleged side effects, and, perhaps, because of his own sexism, Chapple saw society's salvation in sterilization by tubo-ligature for defective women and the wives of defective men.<sup>26</sup> Also recommended was a central board for the issue of marriage certificates based on reports by its own medical officers. If on the basis of such a report a certificate was refused, it should be granted, he suggested, on receipt of a certificate of sterilization by tubo-ligature.

Chapple's work was an important one, but its exact influence is hard to detect. It was quoted by doctors who were surveyed by the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders. From England, where he sat as a Liberal Member of Parliament from 1910 to 1918 and from 1922 to 1924, Chapple also entered the fray over the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Bill and attacked Peter Fraser's anti-eugenic arguments via the press.

Chapple was himself anxious that his 'cure' for society might legitimize birth control through sanctioning sterilization<sup>27</sup> and this concern was the dominant message of a work written in direct response to The Fertility of the Unfit. In 1905 the Rev. J.L.A. Kayll, a prison chaplain and a corresponding member of the Howard Association, entered print with A Plea for the Criminal. Being a reply to Dr. Chapple's work "The Fertility of the Unfit" and an attempt to explain the leading principles of Criminological and Reformatory Science. Much of the work was an attack on the evils of birth control, a menace which, he feared, would be aggravated by Chapple's suggested

24 ibid., p.83.

25 ibid., p.xii.

26 Chapple suggested that criminal or mentally defective women should be offered the alternative of sterilization or incarceration during the child-bearing period. The wife of a criminal or mentally defective man, he suggested, should be offered a divorce or be offered her husband back on condition that she be sterilized. See ibid., p.120.

27 The writer recommended that operative interference with those fit to procreate a healthy stock should be an offence. See ibid., p.122..

remedy for society's ills. Kayll did, however, make several intelligent criticisms of the eugenic viewpoint. He refuted the claim that criminals had large families and critically examined Chapple's example of the Jukes family, that model of defective breeding which eugenists were still quoting several decades later.<sup>28</sup> Kayll also drew attention to the complexity of heredity and the fact that sterilization of the 'unfit' would prevent the birth of the 'fit' as well as the 'unfit'.<sup>29</sup> Such criticism did little, however, to dissuade those who were convinced of the urgency of facing up to racial degeneracy and it was this conviction which inspired the establishment of a New Zealand branch of the Eugenics Education Society.

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28 J.L.A. Kayll, A Plea for the Criminal. Being a reply to Dr. Chapple's work "The Fertility of the Unfit" and an attempt to explain the leading principles of Criminological and Reformatory Science, Invercargill, 1905, pp.93-8.

29 ibid., p.103.

CHAPTER TWO

## THE EUGENICS EDUCATION SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

our Society aims mainly at spreading and encouraging knowledge on subjects that are inextricably bound up with the necessity for securing purity of race as far as possible.... We advocate nothing revolutionary.... We simply ask the public to join with us in seeking knowledge and in considering the great problem of heredity.

H.W. Bishop, Degeneracy .

Although politicians and public figures played an important part in the dissemination of eugenic arguments, from 1910 to 1914 the eugenics movement in New Zealand was focused on the Eugenics Education Society. The New Zealand Society was closely modelled on its parent body, the London Eugenics Education Society, an offshoot of the Moral Education League which was founded in 1907 as a rival to the Eugenics Laboratory. It is interesting that the first branch of the Society to be founded in New Zealand, in Dunedin, also came into being, it has been suggested, as a result of an attempt to form a Moral Education Society in the town.<sup>1</sup>

In August 1910 the Dunedin Branch of the Eugenics Education Society was, in the words of the Otago Daily Times, "hopefully and encouragingly launched".<sup>2</sup> At the inaugural meeting on August 22 J.H. Walker, Chairman of the Otago Hospital and Charitable Aid Board presided over a body of fifty interested persons "prominent in scientific and philanthropic circles"<sup>3</sup> who heard rousing speeches from a number of local speakers. Journalist A.H. Grinling, the first speaker, attached great importance to the proposed society's role with regard to moral education and suggested that "the sex troubles so rife in every section of society were largely the legacy of the dishonour in which sex truths were generally held". "Happily", he noted, "the eugenist was in a position to lift the discussion above the morbidly sentimental and often mawkish level on which too many of our spasmodic social purity movements had rested and ... [carry] it up to the elevated atmosphere of scientific fact".<sup>4</sup> Speaking next, W.B. Benham, Professor of Biology at Otago University, presented the biological argument for eugenics. It was "almost certainly true", he claimed, that acquired characteristics were not passed on to future generations and so improved social conditions "although to be welcomed on every ground, would not of themselves stem the tide of degeneration".<sup>5</sup> Rather, he suggested, the eugenist should seek such public opinion as would eventually lead to legislation against the marriage of the unfit.

1 See F.Schenk and A.S.Parkes, "The Activities of the Eugenics Society", ER, Vol. 60 [N.S.], No. 3 (December 1968), p.143. I can find no other evidence to substantiate this claim.

2 ODT, August 23, 1910, p.4.

3 *ibid.*, p.4.

4 *ibid.*, p.4.

5 *ibid.*, p.4.

That eugenics offered a platform for those who sought to expound a wide variety of viewpoints is evident in the speeches of other speakers at this inaugural meeting. The Rev. Canon Curzon-Siggers, an Anglican clergyman who was active in the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, stressed the need for sex instruction and for a Curfew Act to prevent young children from being on the streets after 8pm without a guardian.<sup>6</sup> Dr Emily Siedeberg, New Zealand's first woman medicine graduate and also active in the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, saw eugenics in a distinctly feminist light. The greater avenues of work now available to women served, she suggested, the cause of eugenics. "Now that women could support themselves", she noted, "they were free to make their choice [of mate] in accordance with their inherent instincts, which would usually be found on the side of health, strength, and capability in the struggle for existence".<sup>7</sup> She also suggested that the involvement of the father as well as the mother in the support and care of children was an issue which the proposed society should campaign for. After local lawyer, Wesleyan preacher and sometime Professor of History and Economics at Otago University H.D. Bedford had attacked illegitimacy, which, he announced, "showed a great depravity of mind",<sup>8</sup> the meeting appointed a council to govern the affairs of their society. The pre-eminence of the medical, clerical and academic professions within the eugenics movement is reflected in the composition of this council : three ministers of religion, two university professors and seven doctors.

A similar procedure led to the establishment of branches in Wellington, Christchurch and Timaru. The activities of the Dunedin council did much to attract publicity to the eugenics cause and in early 1911 H.B. Kirk, Professor of Biology at Victoria University College, mooted the formation of a Wellington branch of the Eugenics Education Society at an open meeting of the Philosophical Society. From within the Society Kirk and his "little band of eugenists"<sup>9</sup> worked towards this goal, a goal which was realized at a public meeting in the Town Hall on May 11, 1911.

<sup>6</sup> As President of the Dunedin Branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children his belief in the necessity for the segregation of feeble-minded females and for sterilization as a means of combating illegitimacy is apparent in his Presidential Addresses at that organization's annual meetings. See ODT, May 26, 1911, May 27, 1915. Other members of the Eugenics Education Society who were also active in the Dunedin Branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children included Mrs Leslie Harris, the Rev. A.E. Axelson and H.D. Bedford.

<sup>7</sup> ODT, August 23, 1910, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> Evening Post, May 10, 1911, p.2.

Dr J.M. Mason, formerly Chief Health Officer for New Zealand, presided over the "well-attended"<sup>10</sup> meeting, which elected a committee of eminent political, medical and academic figures. Among this committee were Kirk, who was soon selected as President of the branch; Sir Robert Stout and Truby King. Other personnel represented the full spectrum of political beliefs and included A.H. Hindmarsh, City Councillor and, later, Labour Member of Parliament for Wellington South; R.A. Wright, Opposition Member of Parliament for Wellington South; and T.M. Wilford, the Mayor and Member of Parliament for Hutt, who was to lead the Liberal Opposition from 1919 to 1925. Other figures of note on the committee included A. Hamilton, Director of the Dominion Museum; G. Hogben, Inspector-General of Schools; Dr F. Hay, Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals; and Mrs A.R. Atkinson, who was active in the Society for the Protection of Women and Children and, at the time, Vice-President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

In July of the same year members of the North Canterbury Hospital and Charitable Aid Board, concerned at the burgeoning cost of supporting the 'unfit', called a public meeting to form a branch in Christchurch. Consequently, on July 25 local Stipendiary Magistrate H.W. Bishop presided over a "fair"<sup>11</sup> attendance at the City Council Chambers. After the Chairman had drawn attention to the "enormous" number of degenerates in the town, for whom surgical treatment at an early age was advocated,<sup>12</sup> the meeting was addressed by Dr W.H. Symes on 'Degeneracy'. Officers for the new branch were also elected, their ranks including five doctors and four members of the North Canterbury Charitable Aid Board. Although the Christchurch branch was apparently an active one and produced several tracts, it was obviously also a small one. In his booklet, Degeneracy, President H.W. Bishop lamented "the difficulty of overcoming the unwillingness of intelligent men and women to consider more deeply sex union and the great mystery of production"<sup>13</sup> and the local movement was portrayed as a small but dedicated band. By late 1912 the city contributed only twenty subscribers to the Eugenics Review, a figure which was matched by Nelson, where there was no local branch of the Society, and only one-sixth of the number of subscribers in Dunedin.

10 Evening Post, May 12, 1911, p.3.

11 Press, July 26, 1911, p.11.

12 ibid., p.11.

13 H.W. Bishop, Degeneracy, Christchurch, 1911, p.2.

Eugenics literature from abroad played an important role in the New Zealand movement, both as a means of securing converts to it and as a basis for addresses and for discussion at the Society's monthly meetings. The New Zealand Society had, for example, ten thousand copies of the booklet What is Eugenics?, which was reprinted from the Birmingham Daily Post, printed for distribution and supplied a wide variety of eugenic writings from the parent Society.<sup>14</sup> In 1912 the honorary organizer of the local Society, Miss L. Macgeorge, outlined its strategy for expansion: "In each town the object was to gain subscribers to the 'Review', and readers and students of eugenics literature before any branch was formed there".<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the presence of over forty subscribers to the Eugenics Review in Timaru led to the establishment of a branch in the town on July 2, 1912. The medical profession continued its pre-eminence in the movement with a local doctor as president of the branch and membership soon totalled sixty, out of a total New Zealand membership of approximately two hundred.<sup>16</sup>

The Eugenics Education Society of New Zealand had strong ties with the parent Society in London through its constitution, through literature (especially the Eugenics Review) and through personal links.<sup>17</sup> The objects of the London Society were also those of the New Zealand Society:

- (1) To set forth persistently the National Importance of Eugenics in order to modify public opinion, and to create a sense of responsibility in the respect of bringing all matters pertaining to human parenthood under the domination of Eugenic ideals.
- (2) To spread a knowledge of the Laws of Heredity so far as they are surely known, and so far as that knowledge may affect the improvement of the race.
- (3) To further Eugenic teaching at home, in the schools, and elsewhere.

<sup>14</sup> See White Ribbon, Vol.18, No.207 (September 18, 1912), p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Press, August 1, 1912, p.2. The "Review" referred to is the Eugenics Review, the journal of the London Eugenics Education Society.

<sup>16</sup> ibid., p.2.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Mrs P. Harris, the New Zealand representative on the council of the London Eugenics Education Society was the sister-in-law of Mrs Leslie Harris, a member of the council of the Dunedin branch. In 1912 Dr Emily Siedeberg travelled as New Zealand representative to the First International Eugenic Congress held in London.

Like its parent body, the New Zealand movement concentrated largely on public education and eschewed a controversial role. It was obviously feared that the association of extreme ideas (such as compulsory sterilization) with the Society would alienate public opinion and during the inaugural meeting of the Wellington branch, for example, Professor Kirk urged "calmness of utterance and avoidance of extravagant statements".<sup>18</sup> To a similar end the New Zealand Society followed the policy of its parent body in requiring that all addresses given under the Society's auspices had first to be cleared by its council. The President of the Dunedin branch, Professor W.B. Benham, was keen to portray the Society as a body of reasonable and detached observers. "The society", he claimed, "did not exist to put forth any proposals for altering social conditions, but it was their business to educate themselves".<sup>19</sup> It is therefore understandable that Benham was alarmed when the Rev. Canon Curzon-Siggers, who had just retired as a Vice-President of the Society, extolled the virtues of sterilization at the annual meeting of the Dunedin Branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children. Benham was quick to dissociate the Eugenics Education Society from this remedy, which it had been suggested would lead to sunnier disposition and brighter intellect.<sup>20</sup> A similar emphasis on caution is apparent in the annual reports of the Society's Wellington branch. In its second annual report the branch noted that it had "no desire to advertise itself by advocating drastic legislation or sensational experiments in social reform", and announced its resolve to restrict itself to "quiet educational propaganda by means of public lectures and by encouraging students of eugenics to put the results of their researches before its members at their monthly meetings".<sup>21</sup>

The Society was obviously aware that this stress on self-education could lead to an inward-looking and ineffective organization. Accordingly, in July 1912 what was heralded as "The New Scheme for Organization of the Society" was introduced.<sup>22</sup> Central to this was the role of Miss Macgeorge, honorary secretary and editor, who took up the position of honorary organizer in an endeavour to put into operation Object Three of the Society -

<sup>18</sup> Evening Post, May 12, 1911, p.3.

<sup>19</sup> ODT, August 27, 1912, p.6. For further expression of this approach see also ODT, July 31, 1912, p.9.

<sup>20</sup> See ODT, May 31, 1911, p.5. For the Rev. Canon Curzon-Sigger's speech see ODT, May 26, 1911, p.3.

<sup>21</sup> ER, Vol.V, No. 3 (October 1913), p.292.

<sup>22</sup> ODT, July 1, 1912, p.7.

"to further Eugenic teaching at home, in the schools, and elsewhere"<sup>23</sup>  
 With the inauguration of the Timaru branch in July Miss Macgeorge commenced to journey between the branches in order to ensure that the model of the parent Society was faithfully adhered to. Beginning with a short address to the boys of Waitaki Boys' High School Miss Macgeorge also began to give illustrated lectures on heredity and eugenics to interested bodies. Groups spoken to were diverse and included, for example, the inmates of Te Oranga Reformatory for Girls, the North Canterbury Educational Institute and Canterbury Women's Institute. The great majority, however, were women's organizations. It is also obvious that despite her avowed interest in the eugenic education of the young, the honorary organizer gained little opportunity to address schools or similar bodies - a sign that people were, perhaps, a little wary of eugenics.<sup>24</sup>

From its inception the Society had also assumed the role of a pressure group and presented the eugenic viewpoint on a variety of issues to government and other public bodies. Although eugenists were obviously convinced of the threat of degeneracy and the need for a drastic remedy, they were anxious to gain evidence to support their case. In March 1911 a deputation from the Society waited upon the Hon. G. Fowlds, the Minister of Education and Immigration and Minister in Charge of Mental Hospitals, with a number of claims which included a request that the Society be granted the power to collect data on the family history of inmates of special schools. Since Fowlds was a Vice-President of the Society it is hardly surprising that his response to the deputation was sympathetic and according to the Society, "he expressed his cordial support and wish to cooperate with the Society in the collection of statistics".<sup>25</sup> Encouraged by this, a detailed schedule for use in prisons and hospitals was drawn up and submitted to the Minister. It was never implemented.

Marriage was naturally of central concern to eugenists and the New Zealand Society was anxious that those entering wedlock be subjected to some form of medical check to ensure that their progeny did not add to the growing army of defectives.<sup>26</sup> In a letter to the Minister of Justice in

23 I have been unable to discover Miss Macgeorge's background or other interests except that in 1916 she was recorded as a member of the Ladies' Benevolent Advisory Committee of the Otago Hospital and Charitable Aid Board. See Ladies' Benevolent Committee Minutes, 1916. Information received from M. Tennant.

24 A report of an address by Miss Macgeorge to one school group suggests that the prudish had little cause to be concerned at her subject matter. See ODT, July 4, 1912, p.4.

25 ER, Vol.III, No.4 (January 1912), p.371.

26 This was a view from which Professor W.B. Benham dissented on the grounds that such a check might deter 'fit' couples from marrying. See ODT, May 16, 1914, p.8.

late 1911 the Society urged him to consider the eugenic potential of the National Provident Fund Act. He would best serve the interests of the race, the letter suggested, if the amount awarded to eligible contributors under Benefit I of the Act was increased for those couples who had procured a certificate of fitness prior to marriage.<sup>27</sup> Another proposal placed before the country's leaders was A.N. Field's scheme for medical inspection prior to marriage. In an article in the Eugenics Review, which was later printed as a single page tract and as an article in the White Ribbon,<sup>28</sup> the Wellington journalist revealed much of the tenor of contemporary eugenics.

He began cautiously, stressing the needs for a more exact knowledge of the laws of heredity and disavowing any intention to prohibit the marriage of degenerates. All that was suggested was that prior to marriage each person should be compelled to undergo a medical examination on the basis of which a certificate, graded from 'a' to 'd', would be issued. Such an innovation, it was hoped, would lead those who were about to marry to question their physical fitness to do so and to look more objectively at the health of their partner. In Field's own words: "The 'a' or top grade certificate given to a thoroughly sound and well-developed person would be something worth having; a 'b' would be tolerable; a 'c' would conjure up visions of doctors' bills and physic for a family of future weaklings; and a 'd' - well, a 'd' would be a pity".<sup>29</sup> To encourage prospective partners to divulge their gradings, it was recommended that where one party to a proposed marriage refused to show the medical certificate to the other party, no action for breach of promise should lie. More ominous aspects of the scheme, however, became apparent when Field began to discuss potential uses for the data gathered through the examination process. This data would, he suggested, allow 'undesirable' marriages to be "reported on from time to time" by the Health Department and through supervision of the children of such defectives it might be possible "to mitigate the evil effects of their tainted heredity".<sup>30</sup> Field did not discount, however, the possibility that children might have to be removed from their parents to achieve this.

27 See ER, Vol.III, No.4. (January 1912), p.371.

28 A.N. Field, Eugenics Education Society. Wanted accurate Data about Human Heredity, Timaru, 1912.  
White Ribbon, Vol.19, No. 222 (December 18, 1913), pp.12-13.

29 ER, Vol.III, No.4 (January 1912), p.307.

30 *ibid.*, pp.308-9.

Other concerns which the Society involved itself in included the lack of accommodation for feeble-minded girls and the desirability of introducing curfew law, a suggestion which attracted support from a number of other bodies.<sup>31</sup> The burden of taxation, necessitated by the need to support the increasing numbers of 'unfit', on the 'fit' and the need to be vigilant with regard to upholding a high standard of immigrant to the country also attracted the Society's attention. The Society's concern extended into the wider social sphere to include study of the eugenic value of maternity insurance, appeals for preference of employment to married men and an interest in town planning.

The concern with town planning highlights the fact that despite their preoccupation with the role of heredity, eugenists here, as abroad, were not oblivious to the important role played by environment in shaping society and the people who comprised it. The Society took an interest in the aesthetic aspects of town planning<sup>32</sup> and Fowld's Town Planning Bill of 1911 earned the "heartiest appreciation" of the Dunedin council.<sup>33</sup> In February 1911 the President of the Society, the Hon. J.G. Findlay, Attorney-General, urged members to interest themselves in town planning and the improvement of workers' dwellings and childrens' playgrounds. In this public lecture on 'Urbanisation as an Agent of National Decadence' Findlay drew attention to the declining birth rate of the "parentally fittest" and the "steady multiplication of weeds and degenerates".<sup>34</sup> Although he drew attention to the need for legislation to prohibit the marriage of those with "the gravest transmissible diseases or taints",<sup>35</sup> the speaker's main target was urbanisation. This trend, he claimed, threatened "national decay, if not national extinction" and it was the first duty of the State to check it.<sup>36</sup> Overcrowding and the insanitary conditions prevalent in the cities led, he claimed, to deteriorating physique and a diminution of the birth rate in all but the 'least desirable' classes. While town planning offered a palliative, the speaker made it clear that the settlement of a greater

31 For earlier attempts to introduce curfew law see P.A. Gregory, "Saving the Children in New Zealand: A Study of Social Attitudes Towards Larrikinism in the Later Nineteenth Century", B.A. (Hons.) Research Exercise, Massey University, 1975, pp.54-60.

32 In October 1911 the Superintendent of Dunedin's Botanical Gardens, D. Tannock, who was also a member of the Society gave an illustrated lecture on the topic to the Dunedin branch.

33 Miss Macgeorge to George Fowlds, September 6, 1911, Fowlds Papers 2/145.

34 J.G. Findlay, Urbanisation and National Decay. Address by the Hon. J.G. Findlay, L.L.D., K.C., M.L.C., Attorney-General, N.Z. Under the Auspices of the Eugenics Education Society of N.Z., Dunedin, no date.

35 ibid.

36 ibid.

proportion of the population on the land was, in his opinion, an equally important duty of government if the quality of the race was to be upheld.

After noting the development of the Eugenics Education Society in New Zealand and its success in attracting people of high calibre and social prestige to its ranks, it is an anti-climax, perhaps, to note that the Society persisted for less than four years.<sup>37</sup> With the outbreak of war in 1914 all branches of the Society, both in England and overseas, went into recess but in New Zealand the body was ailing well before war broke out. The major reason for this state of affairs, which led to ever-decreasing activity and, by early 1914, dormancy, was lack of support.<sup>38</sup> The demise of the Eugenics Education Society in New Zealand reflected other factors, however, both of an organizational and a more fundamental nature. The President of the Dunedin branch, for example, blamed the lack of coordination between branches for the Society's inability to obtain legislative action on its proposals. Although the subject of a federation of branches had been discussed, the Society never made a decision on the subject.<sup>39</sup>

Associated with the fall-off in support for the Society was, perhaps, a more fundamental problem: the limitations imposed by the body's role and its resources. Although many within the Society believed that the organization should act as a promulgator of legislation, its major task was, as its name implied, educational. Increased public awareness of the role of heredity and of the threat of degeneracy would, it was hoped, serve a double purpose: it would raise the 'eugenic barrier' excluding the unfit from sexual selection and it would guard against public opposition to such legislation as might prove necessary. Lack of human and financial resources meant that the Society's propaganda, which was directed at both the public and members, was based on a narrow spectrum of alarmist overseas literature. It seems likely that the highly repetitive nature of this material must have presented a real danger of becoming tedious to some members and, coupled

37 By 1912 the honorary Vice-Presidents of the Society represented a cross-section of eminent figures, including the Primate of New Zealand, S.T. Nevill; the Rev. Rutherford Waddell; the Prime Minister, Hon. W.F. Massey; Dr. T.H.A. Valentine, Inspector-General of Hospitals and Chief Health Officer for New Zealand; Dr F. Hay, Inspector-General of Mental Defectives and Inspector of Prisons; and General Godley, G.O.C. New Zealand Forces and later to command the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces.

38 In admitting this, Professor Benham remained, however, cautiously optimistic and expressed his confidence that "in time, no doubt, the seed will germinate, and a greater degree of interest will appear". See ODT, May 16, 1914, p.18.

39 ODT, April 1, 1913, p.5.

with failure in terms of gaining practical results, suggested a society in stagnation.<sup>40</sup>

The demise of the Eugenics Education Society is no reason, however, to halt a history of eugenics in New Zealand at this point and after the First World War eugenic fervour reached a new height. Public figures and philanthropic organizations carried on the work first commenced by the Eugenics Education Society and their dire predictions of the menace of the 'unfit' were joined by those of overseas authorities in a generally supportive press. Among those who continued to draw attention to the eugenics cause well into the 1920s the country's politicians were, perhaps, the most important.

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<sup>40</sup> In his annual report for 1914 the Inspector-General of Mental Defectives, F. Hay, noted that, with regard to his regular pronouncements on the causation of mental defect, he was weary of "repeating the same words to the same audience". See Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion, AJHR, 1914, H-7, p.5. Hay's apparent exasperation suggests a pointer to what may have occurred within the New Zealand Eugenics Education Society.

CHAPTER THREE

## POLITICS

The chief point in the Bill, in my opinion, is this : we have got to guard this colony against the fertility of the unfit. It is the question of the procreation of children that we have to consider, and the question we have to consider, as far as any young colony is concerned, is what is to become of the future people of this dominion if we allow either a man or a woman who has been certified to as a lunatic to come back and resume cohabitation, resulting in the breeding of a race which, to my mind, would be unfortunate in every sense of the word.

T.M. Wilford on the Divorce Act  
Amendment Bill, 1907.

In his history of the English eugenics movement Searle notes that, with a few exceptions, politicians were reluctant to become involved with the movement.<sup>1</sup> In New Zealand, however, the movement appeared to enjoy far better relations with politicians. Right from its inception the Eugenics Education Society of New Zealand sought to attract politicians to its ranks. "The objects of this Society are so distinctly 'National'", wrote secretary, L. Macgeorge, "and its future prospects so great, we feel it only natural, that our Statesmen should be so linked with us to help us guide the helm".<sup>2</sup> While the Society was still in its formative stages J.G. Findlay allowed himself to be appointed its Honorary President and in June 1911 G. Fowlds consented to become an Honorary Vice-President of the Society. Politicians on the council of the Society included T.K. Sidey, Member of Parliament for Caversham and J.T. Paul of the Legislative Council. During the debate on the 1911 Mental Defectives Bill, a debate which saw several expressions of admiration for the work of the Eugenics Education Society, W.F. Massey declared with pride his membership of the Society and as Prime Minister was one of its Honorary Vice-Presidents.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, the Wellington branch attracted several politicians including Sir John Findlay who shifted his allegiance from Dunedin to become one of the thirteen eminent persons who made up the branch's council. Other members of this council included Sir Robert Stout, the Chief Justice; A.H. Hindmarsh, Member of Parliament for Wellington South; and David McLaren, the Member for Wellington East, Mayor of Wellington from 1912 to 1913 and, later, National Publicity Officer for the conservative New Zealand Welfare League.

Membership of the Society by these public figures obviously lent prestige to the body. This link also offered a valuable means by which politicians, suitably primed with the eugenics literature on which the movement was so reliant, could draw attention to the eugenics cause. Both Stout and Findlay, for example, gave public lectures on eugenic topics and the Society made clear to Fowlds its anxiety "that some day not too far distant you may take the platform for the Eugenics Cause".<sup>4</sup> Eugenists were

1 Searle, p.13. He suggests that this wariness was, in part, a reaction to eugenists' attacks on the party political system, a system which they claimed made politicians disinclined to introduce eugenic measures.

2 L. Macgeorge to George Fowlds, June 9, 1911, Fowlds Papers, 2/145.

3 See NZPD, Vol.154 (August 4, 1911), p.196.

4 L. Macgeorge to George Fowlds, September 6, 1911, Fowlds Papers, 2/145.

not unaware of the unique degree of support which they enjoyed from the country's leaders. In its first annual report the Society paid tribute to "the comparative ease with which we in New Zealand can secure legislation on matters proven to be essential to the well-being of the community" and contrasted this with "the abounding difficulties continually blocking the introduction of similar measures in Britain"<sup>5</sup>. The privileged position of New Zealand's eugenists was seen not only by themselves, but also by those overseas. The parent Society in London applauded the local Society for its success in gaining legislative recognition of eugenic principles,<sup>6</sup> and when a member of the London Society's council visited the country in late 1911 he spoke on "The Widely Favourable Field for the adoption of Eugenic Principles afforded by New Zealand".

✓ This optimism about the scope for eugenics in New Zealand appears to have owed much to the country's already established status as a pioneer in the field of social legislation. The duty of the State to involve itself in matters pertaining to the health and welfare of the community was an established principle and eugenists saw their calls for the State to involve itself in the fields of procreation and marriage as merely a continuation of this principle. State paternalism, as opposed to 'misguided charity', constituted, then, an important element of the eugenics cause and New Zealand's 1908 Family Protection Act, for example, earned the admiration of the Eugenics Review.<sup>7</sup>

Study of the Parliamentary Debates for the period from 1900 to 1930 reveals both politicians' interest in eugenics and the complexities of this interest. Belief in the need for eugenics was frequently only part of a wider interest in mental deficiency and society's inability to cope with it. There was widespread concern in both the community and in Parliament, for example, at over-crowding in the country's mental institutions and at the lack of facilities for the classification of patients. Many of those who expressed interest in eugenics also expressed regret at the lack of provision for the treatment of incipient mental illness.

<sup>5</sup> ER, Vol.III, No. 2 (July 1911), p.284.

<sup>6</sup> L.Macgeorge to George Fowlds, September 6, 1911, Fowlds Papers, 2/145. The praise was directed at the Mental Defectives Bill.

<sup>7</sup> ER, Vol. XI, No. 2 (July 1919), p.88. For a discussion of the link between eugenics and progressive thought see Haller, p.77, 93 and M. Freeden, "Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity", Historical Journal, Vol.22, No.3 (1979), pp.645-71.

In 1923 T.K. Sidey suggested that the stigma attached to mental disease was detrimental to the treatment of incipient mental illness and observed that increased public awareness of the importance of heredity had probably exacerbated the situation.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, ten years earlier Sidey had been a member of the Eugenics Education Society, an organization one of whose primary aims was to educate people on the primacy of heredity! Although specialists lamented the failure to distinguish between mental deficiency and mental disease, examples such as this suggest that a crude distinction was in existence and that to some the mentally ill comprised two groups: the 'unfit', who would always remain so, and those whose constitution was temporarily unsettled by the pressures of modern life.

One must be conscious of the danger of exaggerating the popularity of eugenics and clauses of eugenic benefit in a legislative proposal frequently formed only a small part of it. One must also be aware, however, that humanitarian concern with the plight of the mentally ill was capable of being used as a tactical ploy by those whose paranoia with the menace of the 'unfit' severely restricted their ability to develop any deep sympathy for the mentally deficient. The apparently humanitarian espousal of occupational training for those in institutions, for example, often reflected concern at the burden which their support placed on the 'fit' members of society.

Political recognition of eugenics was evident in the debate surrounding the Mental Defectives Bill of 1911 but it had already been seen in Parliament's attempts to deal with the vexed issue of divorce. A succession of private bills sought to make evidence of insanity, based on institutionalisation for a set period and a medical certificate, grounds for divorce and in 1907 seven years residence in an asylum and a medical opinion that one's partner was incurably insane was made grounds for divorce in the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act Amendment Bill.<sup>9</sup>

While those who sought to introduce such a measure highlighted the need to remedy cases of individual hardship, it is significant that many of those who supported provision for divorce on such grounds drew attention

<sup>8</sup> NZPD, Vol. 201 (July 30, 1923), p.365.

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, the proposal encountered strong opposition, especially in the Legislative Council, on the basis that the sacred bonds of marriage would be weakened if the legislature so modified the oath to love one's partner in sickness and health. That one's partner had been confined in an asylum for ten years within twelve years of filing for divorce and was unlikely to recover was, however, made grounds for divorce by the 1907 Matrimonial Causes Amendment Act. See New Zealand Statutes, 1907, pp.441-2.

to the eugenic viewpoint. In particular, it was felt that some action was required to deal with the case of individuals who passed on their plight to future generations between periods of institutionalisation. In 1900 the Divorce Bill had attempted to deal with this problem and three years later the issue again drew notice. During discussion on a petition calling for the establishment of homes for imbecile children, the Prime Minister, Seddon, drew attention to another cause for concern. "There were cases", he noted,

particularly of women, that were taken into asylums periodically. After being away for a time they were brought back, and during the time they were at liberty they had given birth to children. He considered that in cases like this a wrong was being done to the State and to the individual, and, unpleasant as it might appear to be, they ought not to allow a false sentiment to stand in their way. The Government had their duty to do, and if Parliament would support them in the matter they would stop the practice, which if allowed to go on would result in the degeneration of the people of the colony.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, during the debate on the Divorce Act Amendment Bill W.M. Bolt quoted evidence given by Duncan MacGregor that from 1876 to 1903 there were 5814 persons of reproductive age "sexually unfettered, and likely to produce offspring with a strong tendency to become insane, feeble-minded, epileptic, or otherwise neurotic, and because of such or because of general unfitness ... likely to become a charge upon the State".<sup>11</sup> Speaking in support of the Bill, which made seven years confinement and evidence of incurability grounds for divorce, C. Louisson suggested that it "would be some sort of check on the propagation of lunatics".<sup>12</sup> The Bill's architect, G. Laurenson, also saw it as part of a wider eugenic programme. "We are allowing the unfit to live, he noted, "but I think that we should take a step further, and say that we will not allow them to become mothers and fathers".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> NZPD, Vol. 123 (July 17, 1903), p.543. In 1901, 1902 and 1903 petitions calling for the establishment of homes for imbecile children received a favourable recommendation from the Public Petitions Committee. See Reports of Public Petitions M to Z Committee, AJHR, 1901, I-2, p.2; 1902, I-2, p.6; 1903, I-2, p.2.

<sup>11</sup> NZPD, Vol. 134 (September 15, 1905), p.726.

<sup>12</sup> NZPD, Vol. 132 (July 13, 1905), p.657.

<sup>13</sup> NZPD, Vol. 139 (July 11, 1907), p.326.

These who lamented the fecundity of society's 'defectives' had their suspicions confirmed with the publication in 1908 of the Report of the Royal Commission set up by the British Government to investigate the care and control of the feeble-minded. In New Zealand, concern at the report's findings played an important role in the introduction of the 1911 Mental Defectives Bill. Many of the Bill's provisions were a response to awareness of the need for more humane and enlightened treatment of the mentally ill but those who shaped it were also conscious of its eugenic aspects. Concern at the need to segregate the 'unfit', especially those of the female sex, had already led to legislative recognition in the Industrial Schools Amendment Act of 1909.<sup>14</sup> The major object of the Act was to make provision for inmates of industrial schools to be detained after they had reached twenty-one years of age, a provision the necessity of which had been urged by those concerned with these institutions for a number of years.<sup>15</sup> Moving the Bill's second reading in the Legislative Council, Findlay expressed his conviction that the legislation would not only protect the female degenerate but would also give "a certain measure of protection to the life and health of society itself".<sup>18</sup>

Eugenists applauded the 1911 Act's definition of a 'mentally defective' person as one "who, owing to his mental condition, requires oversight, care, or control for his only good or in the public interest".<sup>17</sup> Such persons, it was set down, included "Persons of unsound mind", "Persons mentally infirm", "Idiots", "Imbeciles", the "Feeble-minded" and "Epileptics".<sup>18</sup> In the Legislative Council Findlay also noted that the Bill provided that should the legislature later deem it prudent, the law could be extended to apply to inebriates, the deaf, dumb and blind and 'moral imbeciles', whom he defined as "persons who had proved themselves incapable of rationally regulating their desires".<sup>19</sup> Also subject to approval from eugenists was clause 127, which made carnal knowledge with a female under oversight, care or control as mentally defective an indictable offence. Discussing this, Fowlds noted that

14 See New Zealand Statutes, 1909, pp.153-4.

15 In his reports on the Christchurch Receiving Home and on Burnham Industrial School Dr W.H. Symes lamented the fact that incorrigible inmates were released on attaining twenty-one years of age. Similarly, H.W. Bishop, who like Symes was later to be prominent in the Eugenics Education Society, called for indeterminate detention in his report on complaints about Te Oranga Home. See Education: Industrial Schools, Reports of Medical Officers, AJHR, 1903, E-3, p.16; 1907, E-3, p.9; Education: Te Oranga Home, Report of Commission, AJHR, 1908, H-21, p.vii.

16 NZPD, Vol. 148 (December 14, 1909), p.1036.

17 New Zealand Statutes, 1911, p.14. For H.W. Bishop's favourable comments on this change see Press, August 1, 1911, p.8.

18 ibid., p.14.

19 NZPD, Vol. 155 (September 6, 1911), p.301.

"It is well known that women of feeble mind give birth to illegitimate children, that their fall is attributable to their mental defect, and that these children are largely defective".<sup>20</sup> At the same time he observed that this measure of protection was "as far as one feels justified in going towards stamping out the transmission of mental defect by heredity".<sup>21</sup>

Other speakers, however, were aware that more extreme measures might be necessary. In a tortuous piece of rhetoric J.T. Paul illustrated the anxiety to appear non-controversial which was characteristic of the Eugenics Education Society. After acknowledging the role of poverty as the cause of most degeneracy, he went on to discuss sterilization.

I am not advocating the sterilization of the definitely unfit. I am suggesting that we should discuss it; we should analyse the progress that has been made along these lines; that we should take into consideration the fact that in other countries definite legislation has been placed on the statute-book for the sterilization of the unfit, that in many cases that has been done, that in many cases it has been satisfactory, that it has led to an improvement in the general health of the cases which have been so treated, and where it has been tried I do not think there is any possibility of society going back on it.<sup>22</sup>

If members of the Eugenics Education Society, like Fowlds and Findlay, played a central role in the introduction of the Mental Defectives Bill, the Society was itself the subject of praise from several in the House. F.M.B. Fisher, the member for Wellington Central, for example, expressed his conviction that "There is not a man in this House who does not hope that he will be able to help as a legislator to give the Eugenics Society help"<sup>23</sup> while the member for Chalmers, E.H. Clark, suggested that the Society be given the power to visit and report upon cases in country districts.<sup>24</sup>

Interest in eugenics was evinced by individual members of Parliament throughout the period of this study, for example, when the allocation for

20 NZPD, Vol. 154 (August 4, 1911), p.193.

21 *ibid.*, p.193.

22 NZPD, Vol. 156 (September 21, 1911), p.3. Commenting on this and T. Kelly's call for surgical measures to halt the increase in the numbers of those preying on industrious workers, Findlay suggested that it was "considerably" in advance of public opinion but admitted his personal conviction that such measures would prove necessary in the future, *ibid.*, p.8.

23 NZPD, Vol. 154 (August 4, 1911), p.198.

24 *ibid.*, p.207.

mental hospitals was discussed. More rewarding, however, is analysis of the various issues which brought politicians and concerned groups together as they sought to grapple with what they perceived to be a major social problem. The magnitude of the problem was highlighted by the First World War. Of the 129,127 recruits for the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces examined, 88,895 were rejected as unfit<sup>25</sup> - a sign to many that the country's pioneering stock had rapidly deteriorated. If the war had revealed that "an inferior strain had crept in",<sup>26</sup> the loss of the nation's best stock in battle made an attempt to face up to the menace of the 'unfit' even more pressing.

The first target of concern was venereal disease, to which much attention had been directed by the Anzac soldiers' attraction to the lowlife of the Continent and by pioneers in prevention like Ettie Rout.<sup>27</sup> This concern linked together persons and groups concerned with a complex of issues: sexual precocity, race degeneration and care of the feeble-minded, who were portrayed as "the great propagators of this disease".<sup>28</sup> The fear of the emotions, and consequent 'ill assorted pairing', which had played an important part in the formation of the Eugenics Education Society both at Home and in New Zealand, was manifested in the institution of women Health Patrols under the Social Hygiene Act of 1917.<sup>29</sup> Armed with torch and badge these fearless guardians of public morality patrolled parks and picture-theatres until Government retrenchment in the 1920s and exasperation at their meddlesome habits saw their demise.<sup>30</sup>

Concern with venereal disease also revived the allied issues of marriage certificates and segregation of the 'unfit'. Moving the second reading of the Social Hygiene Bill, the Minister of Public Health, Russell, had intimated that at some point in the future persons entering marriage might require a certificate of freedom from sexual disease.<sup>31</sup> His suggestion,

25 S. Moore, Mental Hygiene: The Magnitude of the Mental Hygiene Problem in New Zealand, Wellington, 1927, p.2.

26 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.28.

27 See P.S. O'Connor, "Venus and the Lonely Kiwi: The War Effort of Miss Ettie A. Rout", New Zealand Journal of History, Vol.1, No. 1 (April 1967), pp.11-32.

28 NZPD, Vol. 153 (November 8, 1910), p.414.

29 See New Zealand Statutes, 1917, pp.124-5.

30 The patrols were introduced to facilitate the treatment of venereal disease and to satisfy the demands of many women's organisations for women police. Their duties, however were subject to varying interpretation. See Health Patrols, H147.

31 NZPD, Vol. 180 (October 4, 1917), p.636.

supported by two other speakers, was one affirmed at frequent periods. In July 1919 the Waikato Hospital and Charitable Aid Board passed a resolution in which it expressed alarm at the menace of venereal disease and urged the Minister of Health to issue a public warning

to all parents impressing on them in the strongest terms possible their moral duty to their own families in particular, and to the State in general, not to sanction the marriage of their sons or daughters unless both the contracting parties possess Doctors' certificates that they are free from any inherited or transmissible disease. Further the Board confidently hopes that your warning will be merely the forerunner of legislation during the next Session of Parliament, making it compulsory for the contracting parties in a marriage to produce health certificates before a license is issued to them.<sup>32</sup>

The suggestion was endorsed by the Nelson, Patea, Southland and North Canterbury Hospital Boards.<sup>33</sup>

The eugenic aspects of the issue were highlighted in the report of the Committee of the Board of Health appointed to investigate venereal diseases which was released in 1922. The threat to the race posed by these diseases was enumerated in evidence given by a variety of specialists and representatives of philanthropic bodies. Although lamenting modern city life and the breakdown of home influence, much of the blame for the 'problem' fell at the feet of the female 'defective'. A common attitude was that revealed in a statement on the feeble-minded made to the Committee by J. Beck, Officer in Charge of the Industrial and Special Schools Branch of the Education Department. "The tendency to lead dissolute lives", he noted, "is especially noticeable in the females.... Often amiable in disposition and physically attractive, they either marry and bring forth a new generation of defectives, or they become irresponsible sources of corruption and debauchery in the communities where they live".<sup>34</sup> The mentally defective

- <sup>32</sup> Waikato Hospital and Charitable Aid Board to Minister of Health, July 24, 1919, Social Hygiene Act-Proposed Amendments, H130/1. A clue to the official reaction to such a suggestion is contained in a reply by the Acting Chief Health Officer, Dr Makgill, to a similar call by Christchurch's Social Hygiene Society. In his reply Dr Makgill argued that the notion of marriage certificates was not only the result of undue panic but was contrary to public decency, would be disturbing to prospective brides and grooms and would usurp the role of parents, R.D. Makgill to R.F. Tomlinson, November 11, 1919, Venereal Diseases-Social Hygiene Association, H45/3.
- <sup>33</sup> Nelson Hospital and Charitable Aid Board to Minister of Health, August 2, 1919; Patea Hospital and Charitable Aid Board to Minister of Health, August 12, 1919; Southland Hospital and Charitable Aid Board to Minister of Health, August 18, 1919; North Canterbury Hospital and Charitable Aid Board to Minister of Health, September 1, 1919, H130/1.
- <sup>34</sup> Statement by J. Beck to Committee on Venereal Diseases, Social Hygiene Act-Proposed Amendments-Committee on Venereal Diseases-Evidence, H130/1/2.

were damned by the Committee both as the perpetrators of the disease and as its victims, as cause and effect. "Evidence was given to the Committee", it noted, "to show that children with mental or physical defects due to venereal diseases may become a charge on the State; that a proportion of these on being released become parents of defective children, who in their turn have to be supported at the public expense".<sup>35</sup>

The Committee also accepted as fact the primacy of heredity and the abnormal fertility of mental and physical defectives, both corner stones of the eugenic viewpoint. The Committee's recommendations on the best means of combating venereal diseases reflected its acceptance of this viewpoint and hence included a call for certificates of freedom from communicable and mental diseases for those about to marry and the inauguration of a scheme for the 'supervision' of mentally defective children and adolescents. There was, it urged, an urgent need for the registration and classification of all mental defectives so that, where necessary, they might be segregated "either in mental hospitals or in special institutions where these defectives may be suitably taught, and, where possible, usefully employed to defray the cost of their maintenance".<sup>36</sup>

The agitation and atmosphere of concern which led to the 1922 inquiry into venereal diseases did not stop there and carried on to express itself in events surrounding the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders and, four years later, the Mental Defectives Amendment Act. 'Defective' women continued to be a focus of concern since, to people like G. Benstead, Principal of Otekaike Special School and member of the now defunct Eugenics Education Society Council, it was a notorious fact that they became prostitutes, criminals and prolific breeders.<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, there were those who were alarmed when, in response to the extension of the juvenile probation system, the Te Oranga Home for girls was closed in November 1918. The official visitors to the Addington Reformatory were so alarmed at the threat posed to the health and morals of the community that they petitioned the Justice Department, the Prime Minister, Hospital Boards and Members of Parliament to reopen the Home. "Where a girl was found to be definitely feeble-minded or incurably oversexed otherwise", they noted, "she

<sup>35</sup> Report of the Committee of the Board of Health to Inquire into Venereal Diseases in New Zealand, AJHR, 1922, H-31A, p.21.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>37</sup> See Education: Special Schools, and Infant Life Protection, No.3, Report of the Principal, Special School for Boys, Otekaike, AJHR, 1910, E-4, p.12.

should be protected by operation; or she might need to be detained for life either at a Home other than this or in a special wing".<sup>38</sup> Their cause was not unwillingly taken up by the North Canterbury Hospital Board, which at this time was actively involved in tackling the wider issue of mental deficiency.<sup>39</sup>

Among these activists was B.E. Baughan, authoress and official visitor to Addington Reformatory, who identified hypersexuality in girls as a major cause of delinquency. Lauded by K.H. Sharp in 1930 as a woman who had "done much valuable work to bring about the more scientific treatment of the feeble-minded"<sup>40</sup> and the founder of the first branch of the Howard League for Penal Reform in New Zealand, Miss Baughan was a frequent writer of letters to newspapers and a self-appointed expert on 'Our Handicapped Citizens',<sup>41</sup> for whom she advocated segregation and de-sexualisation. Sexuality was seen as a threat to order and in 1923 she told a meeting of the North Canterbury Hospital Board that it "was not only the feeble-minded that required operation, but also those who were over-sexed. From the evidence they needed de-sexualising rather than sterilising only, in order that character might be helped in the individual as well as quality in the race".<sup>42</sup> The operation, she assured them, "would probably result in greater mental activity, better self-control, and cleaner desires".<sup>43</sup>

If female immorality was seen as both the cause and the result of racial decline, the gradual rise in the number of sexual offences committed by males was also seen as "visible evidence of degeneracy".<sup>44</sup>

38 Petition from Official Visitors to Addington Reformatory, Hospital Boards: General, Proposed treatment of Mental Degenerates, H54/79.

39 Mrs. A.E. Herbert of the Board, for example, suggested that the re-opening of the Home would act as a deterrent against the increase of illegitimate children, Press, March 28, 1923, p.5.

40 K.H. Sharp, "New Zealand Women. A contribution to the History of the part played by Women in the Social and Political life of the Dominion", M.A. Thesis, University of New Zealand, 1930, p.80.

41 Title of two-part series on the feeble-minded in the Lyttelton Times, press cuttings in J. Carter to W.F. Massey, no date, Hospital Boards: General, Proposed treatment of Mental Degenerates, H54/79.

42 Press, March 1, 1923, p.5.

43 ibid., p.5.

44 Press cutting, Truth, February 23, 1924, Prisons Department: Treatment of inmates imprisoned for sexual offences, J12/17/1. The number of males tried in the Supreme Court for sexual offences rose from 51 in 1918 to 83 in 1924 although the years 1913 and 1914 had seen 80 and 86 cases respectively. Information from J12/17/1.

Mental defectives and sexual offenders were thus linked together, both targets of the new 'scientific' approach. Attention was directed to the issue by a resolution passed by the Prisons' Board in 1920

Whereas an increasing number of sex offences has been the subject of frequent and serious Judicial comment, especially in cases where young children were the victim... and, as the experience of the Prisons' Board in dealing with prisoners of this class accords, as far as it goes, with the now generally accepted opinion, that, with certain exceptions, persons committing unnatural offences labour under physical disease or disability, or mental deficiency or disorder, or both, which accounts for the sexual perversion and the morbid character of the offence charged:

It is therefore resolved by the Prisons' Board to strongly recommend to the Government an amendment of the Crimes Act under which such offenders could be dealt with scientifically —

1. Before sentence is pronounced by furnishing expert medical or surgical reports or evidence.
2. By sanctioning an indeterminate sentence.
3. By segregating persons so sentenced and subjecting them under proper safeguards to any medical or surgical treatment which may be deemed necessary or expedient either for their own good or the Public interest.<sup>45</sup>

The proposal, which was repeated in the Board's reports for the following two years,<sup>46</sup> earned wide praise from womens' groups<sup>47</sup> and, for example, from the Maoriland Worker for its emphasis on rehabilitation rather than retribution.<sup>48</sup> The implications of this call revived the wider issue of eugenics and, discussing its third recommendation, the Otago Daily Times noted "The logic of such a remedy carries the matter much further than the treatment of those guilty of crime"<sup>49</sup> In a

<sup>45</sup> Prisons Board's Resolution, J12/17/1.

<sup>46</sup> See Annual Report of the Prisons Board, AJHR, 1921, H-20A, p.4; 1922, H-20A, p.4; 1923, H-20A, p.4.

<sup>47</sup> Groups who supported the resolution included branches of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children in Christchurch, Dunedin, Wellington and Auckland, the Women's Christian Temperance Union convention in 1922 and the Women's Branch of the Social Hygiene Society.

<sup>48</sup> Press cutting, Maoriland Worker, December 15, 1920, J12/17/1.

<sup>49</sup> ODT, December 4, 1920.

consequent newspaper article an unnamed 'Medical Man' applauded the Board's suggestions from a medical viewpoint and explored what he termed "the logical extension of the board's proposals". "It might be possible to go further", he suggested, "and say that children displaying hopeless deformity or imbecility would in the future be prevented from continuing to live".<sup>50</sup> To many, the issue remained an important one and attention was directed to it in February 1923 by a jury which found a youth guilty of assault with intent to commit rape. In a statement issued with its judgement the jury expressed its anxiety

that it be brought very strongly to the notice of Cabinet that immediate steps be taken to bring in legislation to deal effectively with all persons convicted of sexual crimes upon women and children. This is very necessary in order that our women and children should be safeguarded from such miscreants, who ought not to be let loose again upon the community in a state likely to repeat their offences.<sup>51</sup>

In assessing the climate of opinion which led to the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders attention must be paid to the important role played by the North Canterbury Hospital Board and, in particular, that played by Dr P.C. Fenwick. In late 1922 the issue of sterilization of mental defectives had been raised at a Board meeting and was referred to the Hospital Committee, chaired by Dr Fenwick. After several meetings to discuss the issue the Committee reported to the Board in January, only to have the matter referred back so that further evidence might be called and so that the fears of some of the Board might be allayed. The Press supported this decision, suggesting that the committee's call for marriage certificates, sterilization on release from mental hospitals and de-sexualisation for sexual offenders was "too drastic" and many years ahead of public opinion.<sup>52</sup> When, however, the issue was raised a month later, the Committee's report was adopted. In attempting to explain this change the presence of several eminent members of the medical and social service professions, who were there to discuss the Committee's report, appears to have played a major part. Along with persons such as the ubiquitous Miss Baughan, representatives from the Hospital, from Sunnyside Mental Hospital and from the Health Department were also in attendance at the meeting.

50 Press cuttings, New Zealand Herald, December 2, 1920; Otago Witness December 22, 1920, J12/17/1. Also see ODT, December 3, 1920.

51 Press, February 8, 1923, p.6.

52 Press, January 25, 1923, p.6.

In its report the Board asked the Government to

consider the question of bringing down legislation covering the following recommendations:-

1. The making of provision in the marriage laws that prior to the issue of a marriage license the contracting parties must sign a Statutory Declaration that they are free from transmissible diseases.

2. As to whether a tribunal of experts should not be set up to consider each case before discharge from a Mental Hospital to determine whether, prior to return to family life, steps should be taken by Sterilization or other means to prevent reproduction.

(a) Where a Magistrate is satisfied that any person appearing before a Court is a Degenerate and in reproduction is a danger to the State, he may refer such cases to the tribunal aforementioned to determine whether an operation for Sterilization should be performed.

(b) In the event of any person being convicted of an unnatural offence the Judge shall refer the case to the tribunal aforementioned, which tribunal may recommend the Judge to offer the offender the option of De-sexualization or an indeterminate sentence.

(c) That an operation for De-sexualization shall be performed on persons convicted of sexual offences against children.<sup>53</sup>

The Board's call for legislative action received support from a number of Hospital Boards although not all were prepared to commit themselves to its recommendations.<sup>54</sup> While recognizing the gravity of the 'problem' the Press was cautious and warned that the Board's recommendations might arouse "public repugnance". The issue was so important, however, that the paper suggested that public feeling should be tested by the introduction of legislation.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, the question provoked no other reference or correspondence in the paper's columns, thus substantiating Primrose's claim that the public were, in general, little interested in the issue.<sup>56</sup> The debate, it seems, may have been overshadowed by concern with the

53 North Canterbury Hospital Board to Director-General of Health, March 6, 1923, Hospital Boards: General, Proposed treatment of Mental Degenerates, H54/79.

54 In July the Board claimed that its recommendations had received "general support from the Hospital Boards in New Zealand", North Canterbury Hospital Board to Minister of Health, July 23, 1923, Hospital Boards: General, Proposed treatment of Mental Degenerates, H54/79.

55 Press, March 2, 1923, p.6.

56 M.S. Primrose, "Society and the Insane: A Study of Mental Illness in New Zealand, 1867-1926 with special reference to the Auckland Mental Hospital", M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1968, pp.176-7.

establishment of institutions for the observation and treatment of incipient mental illness. This agitation, which blended humanitarian concern with anxiety at the rising numbers in mental hospitals, received wide support from women's groups, church leaders and Hospital Boards - support which was apparently wider than that received by the North Canterbury Hospital Board.

CHAPTER FOUR

## INQUIRY AND ACTION 1924-28

In regard to the lesser operation on the male - vasectomy - I do not think its introduction would have any marked effect in diminishing the incidence of mental deficiency. At the same time I have no doubt there are isolated cases where it should be done. There are certain notoriously degenerate stocks in New Zealand, as elsewhere, and this stock should be eradicated if possible.

Dr T. Gray, Inspector-General  
of Mental Hospitals,  
University of Otago:  
Public Lectures on  
Social Adjustment.

As these three related areas of concern: the reproduction of mental defectives, sexual crime and the treatment of incipient mental illness came together in 1923 the Government was prompted to act. In November the Minister of Health announced the Government's intention to establish a committee of experts to investigate the mentally subnormal and persons charged with sexual offences. Chaired by the Hon. W.H. Triggs, who had also chaired the earlier committee which investigated venereal diseases, the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders comprised Sir Donald McGavin, Director-General of Medical Services for the Defence Department; Truby King, Director of the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Health; J. Sands Elliott, Chairman of the Council of the New Zealand branch of the British Medical Association; Ada Paterson, Director of the School Hygiene Division of the Department of Health; C.E. Matthews, Under-secretary for Justice and Controller-General of Prisons; and J. Beck, Officer-in-Charge of the Special Schools Branch of the Education Department. The Committee investigated the 'problem' in great depth before issuing its report in 1925. Evidence was heard from a total of ninety-two witnesses, comprising academics, medical personnel and field workers, from May to August 1924 in eight of the main centres. The opportunity was also taken to visit numerous special schools, prisons and mental hospitals and data was requested and received from England, America, Australia and Canada.

In its endeavour to ascertain the extent of mental deficiency and possible remedies a questionnaire was sent out to all medical practitioners and the replies to this are informative. One hundred and seventy-two replies were received and of these fifty-eight doctors had no information to give, were out of the country or had resigned their practice. Of these one hundred and fourteen remaining only a minority made any recommendations for a remedy but twenty-four suggested sterilization or desexualisation for mental defectives and sixty-eight proffered segregation as a means of halting reproduction. Another thirteen suggested sterilization or desexualisation for sexual offenders while a handful favoured marriage certificates.<sup>1</sup> If many doctors were unwilling to make any suggestions,

<sup>1</sup> Summary of statements, Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders - Replies from the Medical Profession to questionnaire, H54/79.

others were not so reticent. One advised the Committee that sexual perverts, drunkards and criminals could be identified by narrow noses, open mouths and prominent, irregular teeth<sup>2</sup> while several extolled the virtues of extermination. Quizzed on the care and treatment of the feeble-minded, Dr. W. Stapely of Cambridge bluntly replied "There should be no care and treatment of the feeble-minded" and Dr Ulrich of Timaru suggested a "kind lethal chamber" for congenital idiots, a proposal which he claimed the late Duncan MacGregor had privately expressed his support for.<sup>4</sup>

Examining the transcript of evidence presented to the Committee one is little surprised that its report accepted the basics of eugenic teaching. It also becomes apparent that the Committee, in which some members took a more active role than others, made little attempt to appear impartial. Members of the Committee were fond of quoting alarmist eugenic works and of drawing agricultural parallels, for example, "with that of the farmer in preventing his weeds from seeding"<sup>5</sup>. Although any link between mental deficiency and sexual crime was denied in the Committee's report<sup>6</sup> and by several witnesses, the line between the two groups was frequently blurred by many who gave evidence.

While there were some witnesses, like Auckland University College's Professor of Philosophy, W. Anderson, who questioned whether the mentally defective were increasing in number and whether heredity was supreme, the majority, like his counterpart from the Biology Department, J.C. Johnson, agreed that society was indeed threatened by "inferior human stock"<sup>7</sup>. The consequences of ignoring such a threat menaced every facet of society and one witness, H. Binstead, a lecturer in psychology at Auckland Training College, conjured up the ogre of "an uneducated,

2 Reply by Dr. T.A. MacGibbon to questionnaire from Committee of Inquiry..., H54/79, p.64.

3 Reply by Dr. W. Stapely to questionnaire from Committee of Inquiry..., H54/79, p.14.

4 Reply by Dr. F.T.H. Ulrich to questionnaire from Committee of Inquiry..., H54/79, p.69.

5 Transcript of Evidence to Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, H3/13, p.120 (W.H.Triggs).

6 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.5.

7 Evidence of Professor J.C. Johnson to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.210.

mentally inferior democracy".<sup>8</sup> The Committee were presented with many family histories which revealed the cost to the State of "the careless propagation of weak-minded people".<sup>9</sup> One probation officer painstakingly told of seven families with 'mentally defective' strains who had between them, bred eighteen "subnormal", five "backward" or "dull" members, two "feeble-minded", two "erratic" or "neurotic" members, one "sexually weak", one "mental case" and, as if that was not bad enough, one freezing worker.<sup>10</sup>

While a large number of witnesses argued for segregation and sterilization, there were those who suggested that the situation required more extreme measures. Evidence was, for example, presented of an interview between Committee-member Truby King and the former manager of Burnham Industrial School in which the latter had discussed the effect of vasectomy on five inmates. The operation, it was claimed had led to happiness, contentment, willingness to work and docility for the five inmates, who had previously been 'addicted' to masturbation.<sup>11</sup> Although Truby King was to present the example of the gelding as a parallel, the operation was also extolled as a remedy for females. Sterilization of female moral imbeciles would prove beneficial, one doctor noted, because it "might result in their becoming fatter and more docile and sleepier".<sup>12</sup> Extermination offered an obvious, if unappealing, means of dealing with the mentally defective and two witnesses preferred this solution. One, a school medical officer from Wanganui, envisaged the disposal of imbecile children via the lethal chamber<sup>13</sup> while another witness stated that "scruples should be put to one side when society is threatened, and if medical science can render them [unimprovable subnormals] unconscious it ought to do so".<sup>14</sup>

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8 Evidence of H. Binstead to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.236.  
 9 Evidence of Professor J.C. Johnson to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.210.  
 10 Evidence of J.S. Cupit to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, pp.194-9.  
 11 Report of interview between Dr Truby King and Mr Archey presented to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, pp.648-53.  
 This evidence reveals the widespread misunderstanding about the effects of vasectomy or sterilization on one hand and de-sexualization, or emasculation, on the other. The alleged benefits of vasectomy extolled by Mr Archey could not have been achieved by this operation. This confusion was, however, recognized and corrected by the Committee's report. For anxiety about masturbation see Education: Burnham Industrial School, Report of Commissioner, AJHR, 1906, E-3B, p.8 and A. Comfort, The Anxiety Makers: Some curious preoccupations of the medical profession, London, 1967.  
 12 Evidence of Dr. A. Crosbie to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.581.  
 13 Evidence of Dr. E. Gunn to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.81.  
 14 Evidence of C.M. Carter to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.265.

In an inquiry into feeble-mindedness, it is, perhaps, not surprising that the 'secret vice' also raised its head. The representative of the Roman Catholic Church, who denied that heredity made one's fate inevitable and presented the church's opposition to sterilization claimed at the same time that self-abuse was "multiplying the feeble-minded".<sup>15</sup> Similarly, an Auckland probation officer blamed crime and delinquency on spoilt children, self-abuse and a sagging bed. There was hope, however, and the witness assured the Committee that a hard bed would even 'cure' those who committed unnatural offences on animals.<sup>16</sup>

The Committee's report was a relatively lengthy document in which it set out to answer the question "Can the propagation of mental defect by mental defectives and the debasing of the race thereby be greatly checked if not completely prevented?"<sup>17</sup> The answer, it claimed, was a definite 'yes', achievable through the complementary processes of segregation and sterilization. On the next page of the report, however, the Committee acknowledged that mental deficiency could never be completely eradicated since apparently 'normal' stocks gave birth to mental defectives,<sup>18</sup> an occurrence which to some cast the entire eugenics mission into doubt. As the Eugenics Review noted in presenting a resumé of the report, the works of writers on eugenics were freely quoted throughout,<sup>19</sup> including Wallen's statement that feeblemindedness was "a prolific source of poverty, destitution, all kinds of crime against property and person, social immorality, illegitimacy, and of prolific and degenerate progeny."<sup>20</sup> This was a considerable achievement given that the Committee accepted Goddard's estimate that mental defectives made up two to three per cent of the population. The Committee accepted as fact that mental defectives had large families and the report presented six family trees which, it was claimed, revealed the hereditary nature of physical and mental degeneracy and detailed the cost to the State of each family's fecundity.<sup>21</sup>

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- 15 Evidence of Father McGrath to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.94.  
 16 Evidence of Rev. Jeffreys to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, pp.268-70.  
 17 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.20.  
 18 *ibid.*, p.21.  
 19 ER, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (October 1925), p.174.  
 20 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.11.  
 21 *ibid.*, p.9.

The Director of Education, Caughley, had told the Committee that "no trouble or expense is too great to prevent our young community from reaching the same condition [of degeneracy] as obtains in Great Britain"<sup>22</sup> but the report acknowledged that if its recommended remedy was too expensive it had little chance of implementation. Since segregation of all mental defectives would prove too costly, and having dismissed the claim that sterilization would lead to increased promiscuity or other side-effects, the report extolled vasectomy and salpingectomy as a means whereby mental defectives could earn their living in the community without procreating.<sup>23</sup> A Eugenics Board chaired by a Magistrate would, it was proposed, have the power to make sterilization a condition of release from institutions under its control or from its register. Consent from the defective's parents or guardians to the operation would, however, be necessary. The Board's register would include the names of mental defectives not inmates of mental hospitals who came within the definition of 'feeble-minded' as contained in the Mental Defectives Act of 1911, epileptics liable to be dangerous, immoral or anti-social and persons discharged from mental hospitals. Also included would be a new category, the moral imbecile, defined in the English Act as "persons who from an early age display permanent mental defect, coupled with strong criminal or vicious propensities, on which punishment has little or no deterrent effect".<sup>24</sup> Marriage or intercourse with persons on the register, it was recommended, should be an indictable offence.

Immigration also came under scrutiny and it was recommended that the family history of assisted immigrants be scrutinised and that closer supervision of persons arriving as ordinary passengers be instituted. Not all of the report was restricted to negative eugenics. It was recognized that the child-rearing environment had to be improved, especially with

22 Evidence of J. Caughley to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.20.

23 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.20. Salpingectomy, or ligation of the Fallopian tubes, was a rough parallel to the operation of vasectomy for the male. The Committee rejected calls for de-sexualization and called, instead, for the introduction of an indeterminate sentence for sexual offenders.

24 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.15

regard to nutrition, growth and moral development.<sup>25</sup> It was also recognized that Government must encourage "the best and stables stocks" to abandon their reluctance to fulfil their role as primary suppliers of the nation's new citizens.<sup>26</sup>

In 1922 Dr P.C. Fenwick, speaking at a meeting of the North Canterbury Hospital Board, had appealed to the women of New Zealand to 'vote' doctors the power to sterilize defectives<sup>27</sup> and, as we have seen, women's organizations played an important part in pressuring the Government to establish the 1924 Committee of Inquiry. These groups were equally strident in their call for the Government to acknowledge the urgency of the situation and act upon the Committee's recommendations. Demand for the Committee's report came from an intriguing variety of bodies at home and abroad and reflected the worldwide concern with the problem of mental deficiency.<sup>28</sup> Women's groups had been quick to praise the report<sup>29</sup> and bought large numbers of it for study and discussion by their members.

It was obvious, however, that the Government were not eager to give legislative effect to the Committee's recommendations. In 1926 the Minister in Charge of the Mental Hospitals Department, in reply to a query on the Government's intentions in the matter, stressed the need for caution. "We must", he observed, "move along slowly at first. If, as a first step, we establish a register of all mentally-deficient persons, that may be as far as we can go for a start, and later, when public opinion is ripe for it, we may consider what measure of restraint we should put on those unfortunate people who are outside of institutions".<sup>30</sup> As Government ministers received deputations and frequent correspondence calling for them to legislate along the lines recommended by the Committee,<sup>31</sup> the Committee's

25 Picture-shows, the "forcing-houses of sexual precocity and criminal tendencies", were singled out for their threat to the development of sexual self-control, *ibid.*, p.7.

26 *ibid.*, p.6.

27 Press cutting, Southland Times, October 26, 1922, J12/17/1.

28 Requests for the Committee's report came from individuals and groups in New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Canada and America. Recipients of the report also included the Public Health Department in Berlin, where a decade later practical eugenics were introduced on a large scale.

29 See, for example National Council of Women, Draft of Dominion Secretary's Report for 1925, MS Papers 1371: Folder 128.

30 NZPD, Vol.210 (August 10, 1926), p.282.

31 During the discussion on the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill in 1928 the Minister in Charge of the Mental Hospitals Department, J.A.Young, acknowledged the frequent correspondence received on the issue "largely from women's social welfare organizations". See NZPD, Vol.217, (July 24, 1928), p.695.

personnel were increasingly anxious that they had endured "painful and repulsive evidence"<sup>32</sup> only to have their recommendations apparently ignored by the Government. The Committee's chairman, W.H. Triggs, was anxious to remind his fellow parliamentarians of the threat posed by the "shiftless part of the population and those of weak moral tone and feeble intelligence" whom, he assured them, bred like rabbits.<sup>33</sup>

By 1927 the Government had a legitimate excuse for its inaction. It was awaiting a report by Dr T. Gray, who was about to succeed Truby King as head of the Mental Hospitals Department, on his tour of Great Britain, America and Europe, where he had studied their differing responses to the problem of mental deficiency. The fruit of this extensive tour, lauded by W.H. Triggs as "a very sound, scientific, and level-headed report"<sup>34</sup> was tabled in October 1927.<sup>35</sup> Although convinced that it was possible to "gradually assume control" of the incidence of mental deficiency,<sup>36</sup> Gray was quick to criticize those who believed that an instant panacea was available if overseas, notably American, models were followed. Instead, he noted, New Zealand should inaugurate a comprehensive scheme for the social control of the feeble-minded, a scheme aimed at achieving "a maximum of production and a minimum of reproduction".<sup>37</sup>

Four methods of preventing the procreation of the 'unfit' were discussed: sterilization, segregation, reform of the marriage law and eugenic education. Of these sterilization received the most attention, a reflection of the fascination many in New Zealand had for this 'cure'.<sup>38</sup> Following a lengthy discussion of California's sterilization law a series of possible arguments against sterilization were preferred and then point-for-point repudiated. It was obvious that, to Gray, opposition to sterilization was founded on ignorance and mis-information and he was

32 NZPD, Vol.206 (July 3,1925), p.191. The words are those of W.H. Triggs, chairman of the Committee.

33 NZPD, Vol.212 (June 30,1927), p.143.

34 *ibid.*, (July 5, 1927), p.129.

35 Mental Deficiency and its Treatment. Report on visits of inspection to various institutions in Great Britain, America, and the Continent, by Dr. Theo. G. Gray, Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals in the Dominion of New Zealand, AJHR, 1927, H-7A.

36 *ibid.*, p.2.

37 *ibid.*, p.7.

38 In his report for 1927 Truby King noted that while enthusiasm for "extreme measures" was waning in the United States, faith in sterilization and segregation remained unshaken in New Zealand, Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion, AJHR, 1927, H-7, p.4.

confident that "humanity will be best served by cutting off plasmic taint at its source".<sup>39</sup> "There is", he flatly stated, "no argument against the sterilization of those feeble-minded persons who are known to be the offspring of feeble-minded parents, and the majority do come from such.... the stock should be eradicated".<sup>40</sup> Going beyond the recommendations of the 1924 Committee he suggested that the proposed Eugenics Board should have the power to "order" sterilization, a power which he hoped would be exercised in "a tentative and discreet way".<sup>41</sup> This, of course, was only one part of the wider scheme and much of his report offered a balanced discussion of alternative methods of classification and rehabilitation. The true character of the report was, however, characterized by Gray's closing passage, a quotation from J.H. Curle in Today and Tomorrow:

Australians and New Zealanders still have it in their power, by excluding colour, limiting entry to the best whites, and preventing the unfit from breeding, to become, and remain, about the finest white strains in the world.<sup>42</sup>

The release of Gray's report provided another document for those interested in the issue to peruse and meant that the Government now had little excuse to delay legislative action. It was obvious, however, that not all who were involved in the field of mental hygiene accepted the eugenic principles on which official thinking in this period was based. Discussing the 1924 Committee in his report for 1927, Truby King, the out-going head of the Mental Hospitals Department, expressed his belief in the need for "a competent committee to... reconsider the whole situation with Dr Gray",<sup>43</sup> a belief which suggested dissatisfaction with the conclusions reached in the report of the 1924 Committee (of which King was a member). Misgivings about the Committee's report were also expressed in 1927 by S.A. Moore M.D., M.R.C.P. who although anxious to foster awareness of mental hygiene saw the solution to what he argued was a worsening mental health situation in psychology rather than eugenics. It was unfortunate, he suggested, that the Committee "sat at a time when a

39 Mental Deficiency and its Treatment. Report on visits of inspection..., AJHR, 1927, H-7A, p.9.

40 *ibid.*, p.9.

41 *ibid.*, p.9.

42 *ibid.*, p.20.

43 Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion, AJHR, 1927, H-7, p.4.

wave of panic was at its height influencing not only the public but also professional opinion".<sup>44</sup>

This was a viewpoint repeated in the University of Otago's Public Lectures on Social Adjustment, published in 1928. Contributors included T. Gray, Moore and several academics, one of whom, the University's Professor of Economics, Fisher, questioned the economic basis for eugenics. If we were truly anxious to eliminate those who constituted a burden on society, he observed, we should eliminate children and the elderly. In fact, he argued that New Zealand's increased standard of production in the last forty to fifty years meant that a relatively large number of dependents could be supported. The Professor also questioned the accuracy with which eugenists could identify those who should not procreate and proffered the view that "It is more important to avoid the risk of preventing the development of one person of outstanding ability than it is to check the growth of ten unfit persons".<sup>45</sup>

Such doubts were forerunners to the opposition to eugenics which emerged when, in mid-1928, the Government introduced the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. Much of the Bill represented an advance in administrative terms but there were four clauses which were subject to much controversy and criticism. The first of these was clause 7 which amended the definition of a mentally defective person by introducing a new class: the 'social defective'. This was an appellation recommended in Gray's report and one which, it was felt, overcame the stress on sexuality contained in the term 'moral imbecile', which was suggested by the 1924 Committee. The English Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 defined the members of this class as "persons who from an early age display permanent mental defect, coupled with strong criminal or vicious propensities, on which punishment has little or no deterrent effect"<sup>46</sup> but the new definition was a great deal wider.

Moving the second reading of the Bill, J.A. Yeung, the Minister of Health and Minister in Charge of the Mental Hospitals Department, observed that those who made up the proposed category of 'social defectives'

44 S.A. Moore, The Social Aspect of Mental Disorder (Reprinted from the Supplement to the Medical Journal of Australia, October 8 and 27, 1927), 1927, p.4.

45 A.G.B. Fisher, "Economic Aspects of Social Inadequacy", in University of Otago: Public Lectures on Social Adjustment, Dunedin, 1928, p.24.

46 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.15.

"are not imbeciles, in the modern sense of the word, and the conduct which necessitates their examination is not always vicious or criminal.... [but] are defective in an understanding of their obligations and relations to the community in which they live"<sup>47</sup> The vagueness of this definition, which opponents of the Bill found disturbing, became apparent when the Minister sought to define the anti-social conduct which characterized the members of this class. "The social defective", he noted, "does not specialize; his anti-social acts are very varied - from cruelty to animals or children to acts of danger to the community, such as arson - and his crimes are unnecessary and motiveless. Many of the acts committed are not crimes: they may be merely wanton destruction or lying".<sup>48</sup>

Another clause which attracted debate was clause 15, under which school children retarded three or more years educationally were liable to have their name and other details reported to the Eugenics Board for investigation.<sup>49</sup> The major foci of opposition both within and outside Parliament were, however, the overtly eugenic clauses 24 and 25. Clause 24 made marriage with a person on the register of the Eugenics Board illegal. This was obviously the closest that politicians were willing to come towards the vexed issue of marriage certificates and was a considerable extension of the provision in the principal act which made carnal knowledge with a person under care and control an indictable offence.<sup>50</sup> Clause 25 provided for the sterilization of defectives, conditional upon the consent of patient, parent or guardian. The Minister was anxious to emphasise the voluntary nature of this provision and he acknowledged that the Bill probably did not go as far as Dr Gray would have liked.<sup>51</sup> It was, however, obvious from the start that the Government had little confidence in the clause becoming law and saw its role in raising the matter in terms of a reluctant duty. "The Government does not propose", the Minister noted,

to force the issue as far as sterilization is concerned, but it desires to give a lead to public opinion. Whether public opinion is ready for such a step remains to be seen, but I feel convinced that it is only a matter of time when the step must be taken. If, however, there is a

47 NZPD, Vol. 217 (July 19, 1928), p.612.

48 *ibid.*, (July 24, 1928), p.697.

49 This was a move recommended by Gray. See *Mental Deficiency and its Treatment. Report on visits of inspection...*, AJHR, 1927, H-7A, p.10.

50 See *New Zealand Statutes*, 1911, p.54.

51 See NZPD, Vol. 217 (July 19, 1928), p.618.

strong public opinion showing that the country is not yet ready, I am prepared to accept any reasonable amendments to make the Bill a work-able measure and a credit to the country.<sup>52</sup>

Opposition to the Bill in the House was based on three main issues. These were those, like Sir Joseph Ward, who found the sterilization provision unwarranted and offensive while the opposition of W.D. Lysnar, the Member for Gisborne, and of the Labour members was based on a broader disquiet. That of the Member for Gisborne reflected his long-standing criticisms of the mental health system and while several clauses attracted his ire, his major criticism was that the Bill did not meet his demands for greater protection for patients and for better provision for their discharge.<sup>53</sup> Although the Labour members focussed their attack on the Bill's controversial clauses, their real argument was with the fundamental basis of eugenics. A creed which damned social philanthropy as a futile waste of money and which saw ills such as poverty and prostitution as the results not of social or economic but of genetic factors cut at the heart of labour philosophy. This fundamental difference was exacerbated by the class bias with which eugenics thought was invariably tainted. Such bias became manifest when the Minister in Charge of Mental Hospitals talked in vague terms of 'bad characters' or suggested that a 'dirty' individual was a priori subnormal.<sup>54</sup>

The principal spokesmen for the Labour viewpoint, Fraser and Holland, voiced disquiet at the Bill and at eugenics, which, it was suggested, had been "dragged down to the position of a pseudo-science by some of its over-devoted adherents".<sup>55</sup> Both questioned the scientific evidence for the eugenicist's stress on heredity and quoted eminent authorities and publications to highlight the need for caution in dealing with the matter.<sup>56</sup> Fraser attacked sterilization as characteristic of "short-cut attempts to deal with deep-rooted social evils"<sup>57</sup> while his colleague repeated a fear held by some, and one which the 1924 Committee of Inquiry believed merited a strong rebuttal: that sterilization would encourage even greater sexual promiscuity

52 *ibid.*, p.618.

53 For Lysnar's detailed criticism see N.Z.P.D., Vol. 217 (July 29, 1928), pp. 684-8; Vol. 219 (September 25, 1928), pp. 502-6.

54 NZPD, Vol. 217 (July 19, 1928), p.610. For further discussion of class in eugenics see pp.82-3.

55 NZPD, Vol. 217 (July 20, 1928), p.627.

56 Fraser questioned, for example, the frequently quoted but scientifically worthless studies of the 'model' degenerate families, the Jukes and the Kallikaks, *ibid.*, p.631.

57 *ibid.*, p.633.

among degenerates.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps equally damaging to the case for sterilization was criticism of the period of time necessary before prevention of procreation had any appreciable affect on the number of defectives in the population. Holland, for example, quoted evidence from Dr F.A.E. Crew of Edinburgh University that it would take 34,746 years to reduce the number of mental defectives from 1 per 1000 population to 1 per 1,000,000 through prevention of procreation.<sup>59</sup> Faced with this the Minister admitted that sterilization would not suddenly lessen the incidence of mental deficiency but he remained confident that some action was required. "It does not matter", he affirmed, "how slow the process may be, it is better than allowing pure streams to be polluted".<sup>60</sup>

In September 1928 the Leader of the Opposition told the House as it debated the Report of the Committee on the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill

There is a very great division of public opinion throughout the country in relation to the proposals contained in the measure; and while some of the proposals are, I think, on right lines, there are other drastic proposals to which ... the majority of the people of this country would be opposed if they had the opportunity of speaking upon the measure as it came to the House.<sup>61</sup>

Study of contemporary newspapers suggests that the Bill provoked little or no comment from the general public, just as earlier calls for practical eugenics had led to<sup>no</sup> observable public response in a sampling of newspapers.<sup>62</sup> The first letter to the editor on the topic in the New Zealand Herald, for example, was from that tireless campaigner, B.E. Baughan, and was one of only two letters occasioned by the Bill's introduction. This was despite the paper's endeavour to arouse interest in the topic by promoting debate on the Bill between W.H. Triggs, Chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, and A.B. Fitt, Professor of Education at Auckland University College. Miss Baughan was also the first to enter print on the Bill in the Otago Daily Times, her praise for the

58 ibid., (July 24, 1928), p.680. See also Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.20.

59 NZPD, Vol. 217 (July 24, 1928), p.682.

60 ibid., p.703.

61 NZPD, Vol. 219 (September 18, 1928), p.305.

62 For a fuller discussion of public response to eugenic proposals see pp. 71-2.

measure being couched in terms of concern and compassion for the feeble-minded.<sup>63</sup>

If the public appeared apathetic, newspaper editors were less reluctant to comment on the Bill and while the New Zealand Herald expressed its confidence that the proposed legislation contained "salutary safeguards against harsh proceedings and goes only as far as the most enlightened and compassionate opinion dictates",<sup>64</sup> the Otago Daily Times remained wary. Although cognizant of the need to grapple with the "perplexing problem"<sup>65</sup> of the fertility of the unfit, it noted that some features of the Bill were "somewhat startling"<sup>66</sup> and suggested that

although the Minister of Health declares that the Bill is framed on sound lines that are dictated by the best experience of the world, some assurance is called for that the drastic steps contemplated by it represent the most truly scientific solution of a scientific problem.<sup>67</sup>

Newspapers were not the only ones to question the Government's wisdom in giving legislative recognition to eugenics and the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill encountered opposition from academics and Roman Catholics. Among those critical of the Bill was the Auckland Branch of the Australasian Association of Psychology and Philosophy, whose criticism went beyond the Bill's controversial clauses to include a deeper concern at its moral implications. Branch chairman W. Anderson, Professor of Philosophy at Auckland University College, suggested that

In general it [the Bill] attempts to impose a narrowly biological control over society at the risk of seriously impairing the functioning of the normal and efficient moral forces.<sup>68</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the Bill from the psychological viewpoint was also

<sup>63</sup> ODT, July 24, 1928, p.15. In a series of articles on social defectives written for the Otago Daily Times during this period, and one of many she wrote on the subject of mental deficiency, Miss Baughan noted that

I often think that some of my poor feeble-minded friends in prison are really only at a Kaffir stage of civilisation and might really prove brilliant successes if living among a people only in that stage of civilisation (August 18, 1928, p.4).

<sup>64</sup> New Zealand Herald, July 18, 1928, p.10.

<sup>65</sup> ODT, July 21, 1928, p.10.

<sup>66</sup> ODT, August 10, 1928, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> ODT, July 21, 1928, p.10.

<sup>68</sup> ODT, August 21, 1928, p.13. The Auckland Branch also objected to the visitation and interference by Government officials which it foresaw as occurring under the Bill, to the cost of administering its provisions and to the fact that it omitted to deal with the causes of delinquency.

made clear by A.B. Fitt, Professor of Education at Auckland University College, who suggested that it was characteristic of "the common conservative medical bias which tried to associate so many deviations with heredity" and was hence "not in keeping with the latest knowledge of the world abroad".<sup>69</sup> More specifically, Professor Fitt expressed concern at the vague terms in which the 'social defective' was defined, at the "drastic" notion of sterilization and at the provision for the investigation of the educationally retarded, a provision which was, he claimed, "vicious to the last degree".<sup>70</sup> These criticisms were expanded upon in an address which Fitt gave to a public meeting in Auckland which was held to direct attention to the Bill.<sup>71</sup> Both Fitt and Anderson were signatories to a joint plea by six of the Dominion's leading academics which was addressed to the Minister of Health and called for the passage of the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill to be postponed. Other signatories included J. Shelley and C.F. Salmond, Professors of Philosophy and Education at Canterbury University College and F.W. Dunlop and R. Lawson, Professors of Philosophy and Education at Otago University. Their anxiety about the Bill was reflected in similar calls from the Wellington Branch of the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Educational Institute.

More significant, at least in political terms, was the opposition to the Bill which was based on religious or moral grounds. Those who argued for eugenic sterilization were quick to insist that harsh penalties should exist for those members of the 'fit' classes who attempted to use sterilization as a form of birth control. To Catholics, however, all interference with the process of procreation was sinful and their concern became evident with the introduction of the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. A tract by the Director of the Ohio Association for the Welfare of the Mentally Sick entitled The Sterilization Fallacy was apparently distributed at this time<sup>72</sup> and the New Zealand Tablet adopted a position

69 New Zealand Herald, July 19, 1928, p.11.

70 ibid., p.11.

71 It is obvious that the meeting was not specifically held to condemn the Bill. Archbishop Averill, who presided, was anxious to stress his neutrality on the issue and W. Wallace, Chairman of the Auckland Hospital Board, assured the 150 people present that "only those who had experience of 'actual cases knew how badly some action was needed", New Zealand Herald, July 27, 1928, p.16.

72 The article, reprinted from the Bulletin of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, differentiated between the materialistic outlook, which saw sterilization as a cure, and the theistic, which attempted to alleviate the sufferings of the mentally ill. The writer also claimed that no disease could be inherited and posited, instead, the toxic theory of mental sickness. See H.H. McClelland, The Sterilization Fallacy (Reprinted from NCWC Bulletin, September, 1927), pp.19-20.

firmly behind that of the Labour Opposition. Observations that the alleged high birth rate of the 'unfit' and the primacy of heredity remained unproven were repeated by the journal<sup>73</sup> and attention was drawn to more obtuse questions. An editorial asked, for example, "Will the individuals selected as judges in [sterilization] cases under consideration be always fit to judge?"<sup>74</sup> The major issue, however, was the threat which eugenics was perceived to pose to morality and Archbishop Redwood drew attention to the fundamental gulf between the two creeds in an article reprinted from Dunedin's Evening Star. "The root of the difference between Catholic teaching and modern eugenics", he argued, "is that the Church makes bodily and mental culture subservient to morality, while modern eugenics makes morality subservient to bodily and mental culture".<sup>75</sup> In a statement issued to the press Archbishop Redwood made explicit the church's reasons for opposing the Bill's sterilization and marriage clauses and drew attention to four major issues. First was the church's concern with individual rights and its conviction that the Bill provided for unwarranted State interference. It was also anxious that those in a position to make such important decisions might not always be fit persons to do so. Third and fourth, were fears that voluntary sterilization might "open the door to immoral practices" and might represent the "thin end of the wedge", opening the door to compulsory sterilization in the future.<sup>76</sup> As the Bill progressed, Catholic fear mounted and the Tablet saw its readers as facing a time of "crisis".<sup>77</sup> The journal was obviously far from confident that the Church's opposition would be heeded and Catholics were urged to note the voting on the Bill and "weed out" at the upcoming elections those who revealed themselves as enemies of religion.<sup>78</sup>

Evidence of opposition to the Bill also revealed itself in a large tableid tract by Miss E.B. Bulkley which was based on a thirty-four page letter to the press.<sup>79</sup> The tract singled out Dr Gray, head of the Mental Hospitals Department, as its main target and suggested that should the Bill become law he would become a figure of terror to future generations. Such a possibility inspired what, perhaps, constituted the most endearing aspect of the tract: two nursery rhymes which reflected the writer's major

73 New Zealand Tablet, Vol. LV, No. 30 (July 25, 1928), p.3.

74 ibid., p.3.

75 New Zealand Tablet, Vol. LV, No. 31 (August 1, 1928), p.42.

76 ODT, July 26, 1928, p.10.

77 New Zealand Tablet, Vol. LV, No. 39 (September 26, 1928), p.5.

78 ibid., p.5.

79 E.B. Bulkley, The Mental Defectives Amendment Bill, Wellington, 1928.

argument - that clause 15 of the Bill and the wide powers granted to the proposed Eugenics Board would excite fear in children and anxiety in parents:

BOGEY MAN

'Dr Gray' is a terrible man,  
 Try to escape him if you can!  
 Mind you study, and mind you work,  
 Never be idle and never shirk!  
 Or you'll be 'retarded', and put on the Roll,  
 And be shut up, and lose your soul!

THE SAD STORY OF LITTLE RICHARD

"Oh Mother, save me from 'Dr Gray'  
 (i.e., the 'travelling clinic')  
 'Cause teacher says he's coming to-day,  
 And if I'm stupid he'll take me away.  
 Oh, Mummie, save me from 'Dr Gray' ! "

"I cannot save you, little child",  
 His mummie said, and her eyes were wild.  
 "You belong to the State, you're no more my child!  
 But Oh, my darling, don't stupid be,  
 Or he'll say we've a tainted heredity,  
 And must be eradicated - you and me! " <sup>80</sup>

Recognition of this opposition came when the House discussed the Bill in Committee on September 25. The process was a long, drawn-out affair which saw Parliament sitting continuously for twenty-one hours and the Opposition adopted various stratagems in an endeavour to delay the introduction of legislation. Many members displayed their intense interest in the subject by retiring to bed at the height of the proceedings. Consequently, members were subjected to an irrelevant and rambling speech by Sir Joseph Ward, for whom the sleep appeared to have been of questionable benefit, on the evils of sterilization long after the operation had ceased to be an issue. This was the major point of significance - the Government's dropping of several of the most controversial clauses. Clauses 21 and 25, which prohibited marriage with a registered person and made provision for sterilization, were withdrawn by Young, Minister of Health and Minister in Charge of the Mental Hospitals Department. Paragraph (b) of clause 15, which provided that school children retarded three years or more

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.* The "travelling clinic" referred to was the proposed link between the Eugenics Board and its charges, the mentally defective. As such it would examine those pupils referred to it as being educationally retarded three years or more.

educationally be brought to the notice of the Eugenics Board, was struck out, also on the Minister's initiative. After these clauses had been withdrawn, the debate was drawn on party lines as the Opposition, joined by the Member for Gisborne, concentrated their attack on clause 7. Despite claims by these opponents that the clause's vague definition could make dissidents liable to being branded as 'social defectives', the watered-down Bill was read a third time and passed into law.

Among those who were pleased that Parliament stood by clause 7 was the Eugenics Review, which attached great importance to the Bill's recognition of this new class, the social defective. Press reports of the Bill's third reading, the journal noted, "indicate that this new class really comprises the hybrid carriers of semi-recessive mental defect - the large families of 'chronic paupers' and 'leaners on the State'".<sup>81</sup> Although the sterilization and marriage clauses had been withdrawn, eugenists, it was suggested, should not be downcast, for the legal recognition of the 'social defective' was "a great eugenic advance".<sup>82</sup> Eugenists had other reasons, too, for being optimistic for the Prime Minister had declared that the clauses withdrawn from the Bill would be dealt with at a future date.<sup>83</sup> The remark probably reflected the faith of many that eugenic measures would become inevitable but to those firmly convinced of the need for practical eugenics it seemed to offer a ray of hope and a goal to work towards. During the 1930s it appeared to some that this hope was, once more, close to fulfilment.

81 ER, Vol. XX, No. 3 (October 1928), p.156.

82 *ibid.*, p.156.

83 NZPD, Vol. 219 (September 25, 1928), p.507.

CHAPTER FIVE

## THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES

there is increasing in this Dominion a grave national danger that, from the material standpoint alone, is costing the country hundreds of thousands of pounds, while, from the racial or biological standpoint, it is menacing the purity of our national stock. The present depression and its consequent problem of unemployment have been the means of awakening more people to the fact of the increasing number of the unemployable, and the alarming rate of multiplication of the mentally deficient.

N.A.R. Barrer, The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand.

Concern with eugenics did not come to a halt with the passing of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act in 1928 and the 1930s saw much agitation and several ill-fated attempts to form a eugenics society. Increased awareness in scientific and mental circles that much of earlier eugenics rhetoric was based on ignorance and unscientific principles meant, however, that the cause failed to retain the support of these eminent persons who had been its strength in the decade previous. Instead, the movement, if it can be called such, derived its support through the efforts of individuals working within various, mainly women's, organizations. Although this chapter focusses on the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, it is obvious that the revived interest in eugenics was expressed in similar calls from within other organizations like the Justices' Federation, Townswomen's Guilds and the National Council of Women.

These individuals' concern reflected not only dissatisfaction with the apparent ineffectiveness of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act;<sup>1</sup> it also reflected disquiet at the growing number of unemployed. In his history of the American eugenics movement Haller suggests that the depression played an important part in the decline of eugenics thought. "During a period of widespread unemployment and severe social dislocations", he explains, "the earlier eugenics argument that social failure lay in the genes was clearly irrelevant".<sup>2</sup> It is interesting, therefore, that in New Zealand the depression apparently resuscitated the movement. The Director-General of Mental Hospitals, Dr T. Gray, expressed concern in his annual reports at the financial burden of an increasing mental hospital population and noted that both in New Zealand and overseas "the economic situation has brought to the foreground the increasing burden imposed upon the community by the care of its unfit members".<sup>3</sup> While Gray's concern was prompted by the need to prune Government spending, other individuals were, as we shall see, prepared to go further and identified the unemployed with the unfit.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1937 Dr Doris Gordon lamented that the 1928 Act was "in some districts, a complete washout... a dead letter", D. Gordon to Dr T. Gray [copy], September 20, 1937, MS Papers 182: Folder 42.

<sup>2</sup> Haller, p.180.

<sup>3</sup> Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion, AJHR, 1932, H-7, p.3. See also AJHR, 1933, H-7, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> See pp 63-4.

Although the renewed interest in eugenics reflected concern with the cost of supporting a large, and apparently growing, army of unfit and unemployable, the example of the Sunlight League suggests that eugenics was still seen by some as a vital component of the wider issue of community health. Wilson's study of the organization,<sup>5</sup> founded in late 1930, reveals that eugenics constituted an important element in the League's crusade for greater national well-being and vitality. The League was a member of the Eugenics Education Society, which persisted in Great Britain,<sup>6</sup> and attracted to its ranks eminent medical and professional personnel, members of that class which had earlier belonged to the New Zealand Eugenics Education Society. The League's objects made explicit its endeavour "to educate people through the medical and scientific advisers of the League, in the knowledge of the laws of heredity, the importance of civic worth and racial value, and by the study of eugenics to exchange racial deterioration for racial improvement".<sup>7</sup> In Christchurch, Wilson notes, Professor Macmillan Brown, Chancellor of the University of New Zealand, who had given addresses on behalf of the Christchurch branch of the Eugenics Education Society two decades earlier, contributed articles on eugenics for publication under the League's auspices in local newspapers.<sup>8</sup>

If Cora Wilding, the founder of the Sunlight League of New Zealand, found inspiration for her crusade for national health in the activities of Mussolini and his fascist colleagues, she was not alone. In 1934 the chairman of the Nelson Hospital Board, Major R. Dagger, gained prominence when he drew attention to the burden which the Dominion's mental hospitals imposed on the taxpayer. Speaking to the Nelson Rotary Club he noted that

Hitler, with all his faults, has been bold enough to devise legislation for remedying the evil by means of sterilization. It may be argued that there would be great dangers in administering a law in regard to sterilization, but if such dangers did exist - and I doubt it - these would be infinitesimal compared with the great dangers which we are allowing to make headway under present conditions?<sup>9</sup>

5 S.K. Wilson, "The Aims and Ideology of Cora Wilding and the Sunlight League, 1930-36", Extended Essay (M.A.), University of Canterbury, 1980.

6 For note of the Society's membership see ER, Vol. XXVI, No. 3 (October 1934), p.223.

7 Committee and Objects, Object (h), Wilson, p.7.

8 *ibid.*, p.9.

9 Dominion, November 24, 1934, p.9. See press cutting, Press, no date, MS Papers 182: Folder 41 for response to speech.

The speech was unanimously supported by the Major's own Board and, he claimed, provoked correspondence from many sources, including Members of Parliament. Among those who took notice of the Major's call was the Dominion which, in an editorial, argued for the revival of public interest in an issue which, it noted, "has been allowed to recede into the background".<sup>10</sup> The Otago Daily Times was also prompted by the Major's speech to express concern at propagation of the unfit, a problem which, it suggested, "should receive the closest attention of all in authority".<sup>11</sup> At the same time, however, the paper was anxious to draw attention to the complexity of the issue and acknowledged that while compulsory sterilization was out of the question in a democracy, voluntary sterilization would likely be rejected by those defectives for whom the operation was most crucial. Moreover, the paper noted, it was by no means proven that sterilization was the most effective means of dealing with the problem.

The fact that eugenics was still a live issue, if only in its positive form, is evidenced in the class bias which permeated contemporary concern with the country's declining birth rate. In their polemic against the evil of abortion, Gentlemen of the Jury, D.C. Gordon and F. Bennett suggested that New Zealanders were too inclined to count their population in terms of total numbers rather than in terms of virility and vitality<sup>12</sup> and lauded the middle classes as "the type of people, par excellence, to breed a virile stock".<sup>13</sup> Similarly, despite an avowed desire to avoid discussing the quality of the population, A.E. Mander was quick to qualify the plea for increased population made in To Alarm New Zealand. The author noted with concern that thirty-eight percent of the country's married couples would produce seventy-five percent of the next generation<sup>14</sup> and was anxious lest moves to increase population merely increased the number of 'unfit'. Accordingly, Mander suggested that parents would only qualify for the modified family allowances which he proposed "by producing at the time of marriage proof that they were physically and mentally up to standard".<sup>15</sup>

10 Dominion, November 25, 1934, p.8.

11 ODT, November 24, 1934, p.12.

12 D.C. Gordon and F. Bennett, Gentlemen of the Jury, New Plymouth, 1937, pp.58-9.

13 *ibid.*, p.38.

14 A.E. Mander, To Alarm New Zealand, Wellington, 1936, p.9.

15 *ibid.*, p.23.

The major evidence of the concern with eugenics in the 1930s, however, comes in a study of Mrs N.A.R. Barrer and her acquaintances, who played an important role in reviving the issue of the 'unfit'. The wife of the Chairman of the Wellington Harbour Board, Mrs Barrer, as the Minister of Health noted in a letter of introduction written for her in 1935, "took a prominent part in matters of public interest"<sup>16</sup> and combined an interest in education with her role in the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union. Like many who had earlier evinced an interest in eugenics, this Masterton resident also had an academic background in biology<sup>17</sup>.

It was in the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, of which she was for a time Vice-President, that she centred her crusade and she used her position in the organization as a means of soliciting wider support from interested groups and individuals. The organization first revealed its interest in the subject during its Dominion Conference of 1931 when the Marton branch succeeded in having Conference pass a resolution which noted that "it is time the question of unemployment was attacked at its root, viz., the prevention of the increase of the unfit mentally and physically".<sup>18</sup> Conference also carried a motion by Mrs Barrer which proposed to send a deputation to the Minister of Health requesting the re-instatement of clauses 21 and 25 of the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. These clauses, which were withdrawn as a result of the opposition they aroused, provided for voluntary sterilization and made marriage with a registered defective illegal. Conference again sent a deputation with the same request next year, a move which opponents claimed was passed "in the dying hours of a depleted Conference".<sup>19</sup>

By 1932 Mrs Barrer was vigorously involved in arousing public support for the restoration of these two clauses under the auspices of the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union. Addresses were delivered in a number of North Island centres, including Martinborough, Featherston, Greytown,

16 Letter of introduction from J.A. Young, Minister of Health, March 30, 1935, FMS Papers 182: Folder 124.

17 As Miss Greensill she had gained an M.A. (Hons.) degree in the subject before entering teaching, MS Papers 182: Folder 83.

18 Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union - Annual Dominion Conference, 1931, p.13, MS Papers 182: Folder 119.

19 New Zealand Farm and Home, Vol.1, No. 8 (October 31, 1932), p.469.

Carterton, Eketahuna, Woodville, and Dannevirke, where audiences were treated to illustrated lectures on the role of heredity and were asked to pass resolutions calling for the restoration of the sterilization and marriage clauses of the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill. Mrs Barrer's Woodville audience was told that if there were no defectives it would be possible to close over half the Dominion's prisons. They were also encouraged to see the positive benefits of the depression. "The depression and its consequences, increase in unemployment, had drawn pointed attention to the number of unemployables. Perhaps this number would not have been suspected", the speaker noted; "had times of prosperity continued".<sup>20</sup>

An important part of this propagandist mission was Mrs Barrer's pamphlet, The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand, which was published by the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union in 1933. The work was written with the self-declared aim "to give the women of New Zealand, especially, the chance of studying a problem the importance of which cannot be over-rated".<sup>21</sup> The hope was expressed that the development of a eugenic conscience on the part of the general public would lead to the reinstatement of those clauses which were withdrawn from the Mental Defectives Amendment Act and to the renewal of interest among "well-endowed couples" in exercising their patriotic duty: child-bearing.<sup>22</sup> The pamphlet presented an amalgam of statements from figures both in New Zealand and abroad on the urgent need for eugenic measures and included many examples cited in the Report of the 1924 Committee of Inquiry and in the debate surrounding the 1928 Act. Statements by B.E. Baughan and Professor Kirk of Victoria University joined those of noted writers on eugenics like Stoddard, who quoted the example of the infamous Jukes family to illustrate the burdensome cost of the unfit.<sup>23</sup>

The presence of the example of the Jukes family is characteristic of the author's refusal to acknowledge the passage of time since the heyday of

20 Press cutting, November 9, 1932, source not given, FMS Papers 182: Folder 124.

21 N.A.R. Barrer, The Problem of Mental Deficiency in New Zealand, Wellington, 1933, Preface.

22 *ibid.*, p.23.

23 *ibid.*, p.8.

eugenics thought in the 1920s. Although scientists had by this time realised that the simple model of heredity presented by eugenicists, like many of their other claims, had little foundation in fact<sup>24</sup>, the author's faith in eugenics remained unshaken. Consequently, the fact that 'normal' couples gave birth to defective children constituted, it was claimed, "no real objection to a eugenic programme"<sup>25</sup>. In a critique of Barrer's manuscript the Director-General of Mental Hospitals, Dr Gray, expressed his doubts about the wisdom of publishing the pamphlet before the release of the Report of the Committee on Sterilization established by the English Ministry of Health.<sup>26</sup> Such a move would have proved of questionable benefit to Barrer's argument, however, for although the Committee urged the legislation of voluntary sterilization, shrewdly portraying it in positive rather than negative terms,<sup>27</sup> it was critical of the unscientific and alarmist claims which surrounded the issue. The Committee, for example, concluded that the alleged abnormal fertility of defectives was largely mythical<sup>28</sup> and stressed the inadequacy of present knowledge on the causation of mental defect.<sup>29</sup>

The booklet undoubtedly served as a basis for discussion within the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union and New Zealand Farm and Home noted the interest which the issue generated. "Women doctors have lectured, old copies of Hansard brought out, the Bill and the amended Bill studied and if nothing else has eventuated it has made many of us furiously to think"<sup>30</sup>. Such activity did not, however, always lead to a conversion to eugenic principles and dissatisfaction with the dominance of the coterie of eugenic crusaders was evident at Conference. In 1933 disquiet was expressed at Mrs Barrer's appointment as a roving propagandist for change in the Mental Defectives Amendment Act and in 1934 her editorship of the body's organ, the New Zealand Countrywoman, came under attack. Mrs Barrer was obviously using the journal to promulgate her own viewpoint and both the Waitemata and North Auckland branches proposed remits which urged

<sup>24</sup> See Haller, p.120,178.

<sup>25</sup> Barrer, p.19.

<sup>26</sup> Dr T. Gray to C.E. Connor, April 19, 1933, enclosed in C.E. Connor to N.A.R. Barrer, May 2, 1933, MS Papers 182: Folder 42.

<sup>27</sup> Report of the Departmental Committee on Sterilisation, London, 1933, p.40, MS Papers 182: Folder 43.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.13,18.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>30</sup> New Zealand Farm and Home, Vol.1, No.8 (October 31, 1932), p.469.

that the magazine should contain no more photographs of imbecile children. The remits were withdrawn in the face of a defiant editor.<sup>31</sup>

Such displays of disunity were rare, however, and the organization's leadership anxiously avoided discussion on the issue. In 1937 this changed, when an explicit eugenic remit from the Wairarapa Executive, which had been on the agenda for several years, became the subject of a special session to determine the organization's policy on the matter. The remit proposed:

THAT in any campaign for national fitness, due regard should be given to the science of eugenics by:

(a) Prohibition of the marriage of those with hereditary taint.

(b) A conservative policy of voluntary sterilization on the lines as recommended by the Departmental Committee of Great Britain.

(c) Establishment of Birth Control Clinics.<sup>32</sup>

It was paragraph (b) which became the focus of this special session and two speakers from the medical profession, representative of opposing stands, were invited to address the assembly. Dr Doris Gordon, founder of the New Zealand Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society, argued the case for voluntary sterilization while Dr O'Brien spoke on the moral objections to such a scheme. These moral objections won the day and the eugenists were unsuccessful in having their remit put to the meeting. A similar fate met Mrs Barrer's call for special social recognition for the mother of a stated number-four to six was suggested as a suitable total-of "high grade" children.<sup>33</sup>

In the following year, however, the eugenists gained an important victory when Conference debated and carried "by a big majority"<sup>34</sup> resolutions which called for a medical certificate prior to marriage, for "a conservative policy of voluntary sterilization" and for the establishment of "responsible birth control clinics".<sup>35</sup> The remit spelt out the role of such clinics:

<sup>31</sup> Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union - Annual Dominion Conference, 1934, p.14, MS Papers 182: Folder 119.

<sup>32</sup> Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union - Annual Dominion Conference, 1937, p.11, MS Papers 182: Folder 119. The Departmental Committee referred to was the Departmental Committee on Sterilisation established in June 1932.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>34</sup> Dominion, July 15, 1938, p.13.

<sup>35</sup> Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union - Annual Dominion Conference, 1938, pp.11-12, MS Papers 182: Folder 119.

- (1) to prevent mothers losing their health through too frequent child-bearing
- (2) to prevent unfit children being brought into the world, offspring, for example, of tubercular, epileptic, etc., mothers
- (3) to give wholesome advice to mothers, who, from the point of view of expense... would appreciate such a clinic
- (4) to be the ONLY place where (except from the medical profession) contraceptives would be available and so act as a deterrent against the wholesale distribution of such things.<sup>36</sup>

This role was further spelt out in a draft "Scheme for Eugenics" which Mrs Barrer sent to her like-minded colleagues G.C. Beckett of Wellington and E.B. MacGregor Walmsley of Timaru. The document spelt out the duties of the proposed clinics, which were not only to offer child-spacing advice but

- To have authority to perform the operation of sterilization when the expert knowledge of the staff considers it necessary for the sake of the race
- To issue a certificate of fitness to couples about to marry, without which they should not be allowed to be married unless first subject to remedial treatment, or, where advised, sterilized
- To be the centre from which provision is made for lectures or talks
  - (a) To parents (actual or potential) on the Science of Eugenics, the privileges of the gift of creation with which they are endowed, the privileges and responsibilities of parenthood, the value to the State of high grade children, the principles of heredity, sex physiology, child psychology, etc.
  - (b) To pupils of secondary schools - such of the above subjects as are considered suitable.<sup>37</sup>

The Dominion noted that the eugenists' victory of 1938 was preceded by a "heated discussion"<sup>38</sup> and debate on eugenic measures aroused opposition

<sup>36</sup> ibid., p.12. The link between birth control and eugenics was not new. Birth control pioneers like Ettie Rout and Marie Stopes expressed concern at the fertility of defectives and were keen to portray their cause as serving the aims of race improvement. See E.A. Rout, The Morality of Birth Control, London, 1925, pp.168-9 and R. Hall, Marie Stopes: A Biography, London, 1977, pp.181-2. In England Searle notes that after 1918 a rapprochement had been achieved between the birth control movement and the eugenics movement, Searle, p.103.

<sup>37</sup> "Scheme for Eugenics", MS Papers 182: Folder 38.

<sup>38</sup> Dominion, July 15, 1938, p.13.

within the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union from members who argued that as a non-sectarian body they could not vote on an issue which offended the religious beliefs of a section of their membership. Instead, they called for a ban on the discussion of 'controversial' issues. Both sides, pro-and anti-eugenics, fervently circularised the branches and there was talk of Roman Catholics leaving the organization.<sup>39</sup> The passing of the eugenic remits in 1938 was, it eventuated, a pyrrhic victory and at the Dominion Conference of 1939 the Dominion executive decided that matters of sex hygiene should be open to discussion only and that no vote should be taken on such issues. At the same time a motion to rescind the pro-eugenics motions of the previous year was carried with a distinct majority by Conference.<sup>40</sup> Religious sentiments obviously played a major part in the conflict and the President of the Women's Division at this time, Joan Drake, later expressed the opinion that "when one sees the number of R.C.'s who are holding prominent positions in the organization it [the revocation of the eugenic remits] is not to be wondered at".<sup>41</sup>

A similarly unfavourable fate met the numerous attempts to form a eugenics society during this period. One of these attempts led to The Eugenics and Race Improvement Society of New Zealand, which was established in Wellington in 1934. The apparently short-lived Society grew out of agitation surrounding the re-instatement of clauses 21 and 25 of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act and the restoration of these clauses was a major aim of the Society. Mrs N.A.R. Barrer was on the Society's provisional committee while other interested persons included her correspondent Mr G.C. Beckett, a Wellington journalist and newspaper proprietor, and Professor H.B. Kirk, Professor of Biology at Victoria University College, who had played a central role in the establishment of the Wellington Branch of the Eugenics Education Society in 1911.<sup>42</sup>

It was in 1934 also that the American journal Eugenical News noted the endeavours of Mr MacGregor Walmsley of Dunedin to secure support for eugenics research in New Zealand. The journal, however, remained sceptical, suggesting that the proposal appeared to be "premature" and expressing surprise at the need for eugenics in such a highly selected population.<sup>43</sup>

39 Jean Nutt [?] to N.A.R. Barrer, no date, MS Papers 182: Folder 40.

40 Dominion, July 14, 1939, p.11.

41 J. Drake to N.A.R. Barrer, July 21, 1946, FMS Papers 182: Folder 124.

42 See pp.17-8.

43 Eugenical News, Vol.19, No. 1 (January/February, 1934), p.24.

Provision for research in eugenics was obviously a mission dear to Walmsley's heart and in a letter to the Prime Minister, M.J. Savage, written in 1937 he asked for the Government's attitude towards "the establishment of a suitable bureau for the study of problems of heredity" run, he suggested, on "conservative and scientific lines"<sup>44</sup>. The bureau, it was proposed, would be modelled on New York's Eugenics Record Office and the director of that institution, H.H. Laughlin, had expressed his willingness to support the funding of a bureau in New Zealand by American foundations.

Little is known of the various attempts to form eugenic organizations in this period<sup>45</sup> and the scant evidence available leads one to be extremely cautious. It seems highly probable, however, that Walmsley was associated with moves in 1937 aimed at establishing a National Institute of Family Relations. The aims of the proposed body reflected a concern for "racial betterment through well-considered choice of partners in Matrimony" and the suggested constitution included an injunction "to investigate every proposal that has been or may be put forward for the improvement of the physical, mental and moral condition, the general condition, the general satisfaction and happiness of mankind through application of the established principles of Heredity".<sup>46</sup> No less grandiose (and unrealistic) was the proposed administrative organization of the Society: a full-time director appointed by an advisory council which would comprise representatives from the medical and scientific professions, the churches and social organizations.

Noting the failure of these attempts to form a eugenics society MacGregor Walmsley suggested that "Nothing came of these ventures; partly, I think, because no one seems to have possessed the double qualification of expert knowledge and of leadership in a difficult cause; and partly because the number of prospective followers has been too small"<sup>47</sup>. These prospective followers, he estimated, numbered no more than thirty throughout the country, a total which, it was observed, compared favourably with the membership of the English Eugenics Education Society on a proportionate basis. One factor which Walmsley omitted was increased scientific knowledge, knowledge which undercut many of the eugenicists' claims and deprived the cause of those eminent authorities who had supported it two decades earlier.

- 44 Copy sent by MacGregor Walmsley to N.A.R. Barrer, no date, MS Papers 182: Folder 40.
- 45 In his letter to Savage Walmsley noted that several attempts had been made to form a eugenics society: in Wellington in 1934 and in Dunedin at least twice, *ibid.*, MS Papers 182: Folder 40.
- 46 Typescript, June 14, 1937, MS Papers 182: Folder 39.
- 47 Copy of letter sent to Prime Minister sent by MacGregor Walmsley to N.A.R. Barrer, no date, MS Papers 182: Folder 40.

Consequently eugenics, which had always been a minority viewpoint, became increasingly so.

In 1932 the Mental Deficiency Committee established by the British Medical Association issued a report which revealed that there was no evidence to substantiate the mythical excessive fertility of the unfit, a conclusion echoed by the Inter-departmental Committee on Sterilization a year later. The Committee also found that eugenic sterilization had severe limitations. If the incidence of mental deficiency was to be appreciably reduced, they advised, large numbers of non-certifiable and apparently normal 'carriers' would have to be sterilized - a course which was obviously unrealistic. Publication of the report led to an attempt to have the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union to modify its pro-eugenics stance at the annual conference of the National Council of Women.<sup>48</sup> This body, however, had other means of dealing with this controversial issue and when the subject of practical eugenics was raised at the Conferences of 1933, 1934 and 1937 discussion was deferred by the time-honoured expedient of calling for a report on the matter.

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48 See "A Few Extracts on Mental Deficiency Culled from the B.M.J. by Dr McKinnon", MS Papers 182: Folder 42 and copy of letter sent in response by G.C. Beckett to the Secretary of the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, March 1, 1933, MS Papers 182: Folder 40.

CONCLUSION

Having traced the development of eugenic thought in New Zealand it is time to analyse this phenomena more closely and, in particular, to discuss its popularity, its membership, and its appeal. One must note, however, that the following remarks apply, in general, only to the period 1900 to 1930. The concern with eugenics in the 1930s cannot be seen as part of a eugenics movement, as it can in the earlier period, and was, instead, the result of the actions of a handful of people with "a bee in... [their] bonnet".<sup>1</sup> The first question one must endeavour to answer is how popular was eugenics. The answer is, perhaps, most succinctly stated by noting that the Eugenics Education Society of New Zealand became dormant through lack of support. This conclusion is supported by the regularity with which eugenicists and other commentators bemoaned the public's disinterest in eugenics.

These people were well aware that the arousal of public interest was essential to the success of the eugenic mission both as a means to the development of the 'eugenic conscience' and as a pre-requisite to such legislation as might prove necessary. In July 1911, however, H.W. Bishop, President of the Christchurch Branch of the Eugenics Education Society, noted "that not 10 per cent of people had any idea of the results from improper unions".<sup>2</sup> The work of the Society in educating the public on heredity and the need for eugenics appears to have made little impression on this apathy. Hence in 1924 Sir Robert Stout informed the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders that "our people are not yet thoroughly alive to the importance of eugenics".<sup>3</sup> The "colossal apathy" of the public was still being commented on in 1928,<sup>4</sup> and was seen by eugenicists as the major reason for the withdrawal of clauses 21 and 25 of the Mental Defectives Amendment Act.

<sup>1</sup> Alleged description of Mrs N.A.R. Barrer by the President of the South Canterbury Executive of the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, E.C. South to N.A.R. Barrer, July 21, 1939, MS Papers 182: Folder 40.

<sup>2</sup> Press, July 26, 1911, p.11.

<sup>3</sup> Statement by Sir Robert Stout to the Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to the Editor by R.M. Thomson, ODT, July 16, 1928, p.10. The writer noted that for the past six years he had been attempting to form "a New Zealand Humanist Society for the purpose of frankly educating the people on all these racial evils."

Discussing the 1911 Mental Defectives Act and the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, Primrose notes the lack of public interest in the issues raised<sup>5</sup> and study of contemporary newspapers appears to corroborate this view. In their editorials the papers generally accepted that the procreation of the unfit was a problem and the Press, for example, drew attention to "the necessity for coping in some way with the grave danger than threatens the future welfare of the Dominion".<sup>6</sup> This concern was frequently part of a wider, more humanitarian concern with the need for change in society's attitude towards the mentally deficient. The Otago Daily Times, for example, noted the "unquestionable need for the institution of some reform and for the adoption of a more progressive outlook in respect of the care and treatment of the mentally deficient."<sup>7</sup> If newspaper editors acknowledged the need for action they were less keen to suggest what form this action might take. Hence, the Eugenics Education Society was frequently advised to restrict its activities to public education rather than attempting to introduce eugenic legislation<sup>8</sup> and the Evening Post observed in 1911 that before more knowledge on the mechanism of heredity was available it would be unwise to adopt action other than segregation.<sup>9</sup>

If one can suggest that New Zealand newspapers gave, in general, cautious support to the principles of eugenics, it is less easy to determine the public's response. The lack of correspondence on eugenic issues would suggest, however, that the public were disinterested in the topic despite the extreme comments and suggestions made by many eugenists. The lack of response to the 1928 Mental Defectives Amendment Act has already been discussed. A similar paucity of correspondence is evident at a number of other points where such response could have been expected: following the call of the Prisons Board for a more 'scientific' approach, during the North Canterbury Hospital Board's grappling with the issue, during the period when the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders was taking evidence and at the release of its report in February 1925.

5 Primrose, pp.169,176-7.

6 Press, July 26, 1911, p.8.

7 ODT, July 7, 1928, p.10.

8 ODT, January 25, 1911, p.4; January 26, 1911, p.6.

9 Evening Post, May 12, 1911, p.4.

If the eugenics movement was not a popular one, it enjoyed the support of influential members of New Zealand society. That the New Zealand movement was an elitest one is a conclusion which is consistent with the comments of those who have studied the eugenics movement in other countries. In his study of eugenics in the United States Haller notes that the American movement "never became a popular one in the sense that, say, abolition or temperance had been popular movements" and suggests, instead, that it remained a movement of the experts.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Searle observes that the intellectual calibre and social prestige of the men and women who comprised the English eugenics movement was more important than their numbers.<sup>11</sup>

The most eminent figures to be linked with the New Zealand eugenics movement were, perhaps, political figures like Stout, Findlay and Fowlds. Although we have noted the variety of political affiliations represented in the council of the Wellington Branch of the Eugenics Education Society,<sup>12</sup> the attraction which eugenics had for liberal or progressive politicians is obvious. This attraction is evident not only in those political figures who belonged to the Society, including persons such as T.K. Sidey, J.T. Paul and A.H. Hindmarsh; it is also evident in those politicians whose speeches in the House revealed sympathy with eugenics. Figures in this category include many independent or Liberal Members of Parliament such as J.A. Hanan, G. Laurenson and L.M. Isitt.

Since contemporary scientific opinion supported the hereditarian principles of eugenics and since eugenics aimed at the application of science to society it is hardly surprising that the movement attracted considerable support from the scientific community. At the forefront of this support was the biological establishment.<sup>13</sup> W.B. Benham, Professor of

<sup>10</sup> Haller, p.177.

<sup>11</sup> Searle, p.11.

<sup>12</sup> See p.18. Other political figures connected with the Society included W.W. Tanner, one of the six original Labour members, who belonged to the council of its Christchurch branch and J.D. Hall, a barrister and solicitor who contested the Christchurch North seat for Reform in 1911 and was Vice-president of the Society's local branch. In Timaru the Vice-president of the town's Eugenics Education Society, A.M. Paterson, was later to contest the Waitaki seat for Labour in 1931.

<sup>13</sup> Searle notes (p.11) that almost the entire English biological establishment joined the Eugenics Education Society.

Biology at Otago University, was President of the Dunedin Branch of the Eugenics Education Society while his counterpart at Victoria University College, H.B. Kirk, was the prime mover in the establishment of a Wellington branch of the Society. In 1913 Miss P. Myers, demonstrator in Biology at Victoria University College was elected to the branch's council. The close connection between biology and eugenics was restated during the hearing of evidence by the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders. Consequently, the need for the sterilization of defectives was urged on the Committee by Kirk and two other major figures in the biological establishment: J.C. Johnson, Professor of Biology at Auckland University College and Dr C. Chilton, Professor of Biology at Canterbury College!<sup>14</sup>

More tangible support for the eugenics movement, at least in numerical terms, came from the medical profession. At the Society's inaugural meeting seven doctors were elected to its council and medical personnel, from humble practitioners to top health administrators, were prominent in its other branches. In Christchurch W.H. Symes, Chief Health Officer for the province, was honorary secretary of the local branch and was one of five doctors represented among that branch's officeholders. The council of the Wellington branch enjoyed the support of the country's leading health administrators and included Truby King, founder of the Society for Promoting the Health of Women and Children and Medical Superintendent of Seacliff Mental Hospital; F. Hay, Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals; and J.B. Mason formerly Chief Health Officer for New Zealand. By 1912 Hay was also one of the Society's honorary Vice-Presidents and had been joined in this capacity by T.H.A. Valentine, Inspector-General of Hospitals and Chief Health Officer for New Zealand.

This support for eugenics from doctors was not surprising - medical science generally supported the hereditarian principles on which eugenics relied and doctors were keen to assume a position of social control, believing that theirs was a unique position which allowed them to comment on, and suggest remedies for, society. The support of many doctors for eugenics was also evident in the evidence given to the Committee of Inquiry

<sup>14</sup> See Transcript of Evidence to Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, H3/13, pp.206-17, 610-15, 725-30.

into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders and in a resolution passed by the Conference of the New Zealand Branch of the British Medical Association in 1924. The resolution, which was also adopted by the Branch's Council, rejected de-sexualization of sexual offenders but stressed, however, "the importance of the sterilisation of the chronic mentally and morally unfit, [so] that a future generation may benefit thereby".<sup>15</sup>

Support for the New Zealand eugenics movement from biologists can be seen as indicative of support from the wider scientific and medical establishment. It can also be seen as part of the obvious attraction which the movement had for many academics. Searle notes that the English eugenics movement outside London was largely centred upon the universities<sup>16</sup> while Haller observes that from 1910 nearly every American university or college had one or more professors inspired by the eugenics creed.<sup>17</sup> We have noted the support which H.B. Kirk and W.B. Benham, both Professors of Biology, gave the New Zealand movement. Other academic figures who became office-holders in the Eugenics Education Society of New Zealand included W. Salmond, Professor of Mental and Moral science at Otago University, who, along with H.D. Bedford, late Professor of Economics and History at Otago University, was elected to the Dunedin branch's council at its inaugural meeting. In Christchurch Professor Macmillan Brown, later Chancellor of the University of New Zealand, gave lectures on eugenics for the local branch of the Society.

The membership of these academic figures was apparently part of a wider interest which made those involved in educational circles keen to join the

15 New Zealand Medical Journal, Vol.23, No.114 (April 1924), p.173. In 1922 the Branch's annual meeting had unanimously passed a resolution which urged

that every effort should be made to provide suitable training and supervision under which many of these defectives may become self-supporting and innocuous members of society, instead of, as at present, being the direct and indirect cause of enormous expense to the State as well as being an imminent moral and social danger to the community. (ibid., Vol.21, No. 102 (April 1922), p.94.)

16 Searle, p.14.

17 Haller, p.72.

Society. Hence its inaugural council included figures like O. Flamank, President of the New Zealand Educational Institute; G. Benstead, Principal of Otekaike School for feeble-minded boys; and M. Cohen, who had a deep interest in education and was also a deputy inspector of asylums. J. Howell, Director of Christchurch Technical College, was on the council of the Christchurch branch while G. Hogben, the Inspector-General of Schools, was a member of the Wellington branch's first council.

Another important component of the movement both in New Zealand and in England,<sup>18</sup> comprised ministers of religion. The majority of these had an academic background; they were also keen to take up any cause which would assist the fight against degeneracy and moral decline. Many also came face to face with this degeneracy in the course of their work, for example, the Rev. F. Rule, a Presbyterian social service worker and honorary probation officer, who was a member of the council of the Christchurch Eugenics Education Society. The implications of social involvement were also evidenced in the overlapping of membership in the North Canterbury Charitable Aid Board and the local branch of the Eugenics Education Society and in the concern for civic betterment which meant that those involved in the Society were frequently also involved in other societies such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children.

Having examined the membership of the New Zealand eugenics movement it is natural to want to examine the appeal which eugenic thought obviously had for these people. Just as the movement's membership was examined in its component parts so, then, we must analyse its ideology, both explicit and implicit, piece by piece. The appeal of eugenics was part of the wider concern with Empire, a concern which necessitated racial fitness if the "Asian hordes"<sup>19</sup> were to be kept at bay. Journalist and Eugenics Education Society member A.H. Grinling was confident, however, that "Eugenics pointed out the remedy for a terrible trend which, unless checked, must ultimately lead to the downfall of the British race and the annihilation of the British Empire".<sup>20</sup> Eugenics was, then, one of many responses to the perceived menace

18 See Searle, p.12. He notes that ministers of liberal persuasion were most likely to join the eugenics cause, Dean Inge being the prime example. It is significant, therefore, that the Rev. Knowles-Smith, a member of the Dunedin Branch of the Eugenics Education Society was also a Primitive Methodist and a self-proclaimed 'Christian Socialist'.

19 E. Olssen, "Breeding for Empire", New Zealand Listener, May 12, 1979, p.19.

20 ODT, July 31, 1912, p.9.

of physical and moral decline, responses which also included the introduction of school cadets and Boy Scouts, of the Society for Promoting the Health of Women and Children and, in 1912, of school medical inspection. Awareness of the reality of this 'menace' was increased by the First World War, which saw approximately sixty per cent of recruits deemed unfit and, it was believed, saw the best stock slaughtered on foreign shores. Attention was also drawn to the issue of degeneracy by the proliferation of institutions for dealing with the defective and delinquent in the period 1880 to 1920.<sup>21</sup> The establishment of a school for feeble-minded boys at Otekaike in 1907 is an example of this process and was followed by the establishment of a similar institution for girls at Richmond several years later. Attention may have also been drawn to physical and moral decline by the proliferation of social welfare agencies in this period. From 1907 to 1913, for example, the Presbyterian church established social service bodies in the four main centres.<sup>22</sup>

The first two decades of the twentieth century were years of great change and turmoil and to many it seemed that the whole social order was in jeopardy. As Olssen notes "pre-industrial New Zealand was giving way, at different speeds in different areas and at different social levels, to a radically more industrial or modern society"<sup>23</sup> and the implications of this process assumed dire proportions for those who believed in the neo-Darwinian struggle between nations. To some it seemed that the corruption of the old world had finally caught up with the new. In 1884 Robert Stout noted that "there is nothing so depressing to the social reformers in the colonies as the existence of the social evils of older lands in our new nations"<sup>24</sup> and the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Social Offenders reiterated this theme, observing that the country was "at the stage where, if its people are wise, they may escape the worst evils of the Old World".<sup>25</sup>

Eugenists were well aware that society was changing both in its pace and in its outlook on a variety of issues. While it was accepted by most that mental illness was a hereditary problem several eugenists drew attention

21 See E. Olssen and A. Levesque, "Towards a History of the European Family in New Zealand" in P.G. Koopman-Boyden (Ed.), Families in New Zealand Society, Wellington, 1978, p.11.

22 E. Olssen, "Towards a New Society" in W.H. Oliver (Ed.), The Oxford History of New Zealand, Wellington, 1981, p.263.

23 Olssen, "Truby King and the Plunket Society...", p.20.

24 Stout, p.109.

25 Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, AJHR, 1925, H-31A, p.28.

to the strains and pressures of contemporary life. These pressures, they suggested, made those with an inherited weakness more liable to break down. To W.A. Chapple, writing in 1903, it was obvious that

our social conditions manufacture defectives, and foster their fertility. The strain and stress of modern competition excite an anxiety and nervous tension under which many break down, and much of the insanity that exists today is attributable to the nervous strain in the struggle of life.<sup>26</sup>

Chapple's observations were supported by F. Hay, Inspector-General of Mental Defectives, who, in his report for 1920 suggested that the mental stress and instability of which modern music, dances and movies were characteristic, made an endeavour to guard the health of the community even more pressing.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of this modernisation came in the process of urbanisation. Hofstadter suggests that the rapid urbanisation of American life is an important factor which helps to explain the appeal of eugenics;<sup>28</sup> such a link appears likely in New Zealand. The link was, perhaps, even more significant in New Zealand, a country where moral and physical well-being were linked with country life and hence where variations from this tradition led, it was believed, to a variety of ills. By grouping together the different social strata, urbanisation made social and medical problems like poverty, crime and disease more readily obvious. In his speech on urbanisation delivered under the auspices of the Eugenics Education Society J.G. Findlay directly linked the process with national decay and noted the existence of "slum quarters" in many cities.<sup>29</sup>

In this time of instability and change, a time when traditional notions were under threat, eugenics offered stability and order and a means to cope with the dangers which were seen to threaten society. If the notion of control was central to the philosophy of Truby King, founder of the Plunket Society,<sup>30</sup> it was also an important element of eugenic thought. The lack of self-control was seen as characteristic of all defectives and, it was believed, lay at the root of many social problems. One of these was

26 Chapple, p.89.

27 Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion, AJHR, 1920, H-7, p.3.

28 Hofstadter, p.162.

29 Findlay, p.1.

30 Olssen, "Truby King and the Plunket Society...", p.6.

illegitimacy, a topic to which attention was drawn at the inaugural meeting of the Dunedin Branch of the Eugenics Education Society and about which, it was suggested, there was "a persistent shamelessness"<sup>31</sup>. Since sexual mis-conduct was seen as evidence of a lack of self-control those who offended the moral code were in danger of being labelled as defectives. Hence the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders was told by one witness, a school medical officer, that "nearly all the women admitted to charitable maternity homes more than once are mentally deficient"<sup>32</sup>.

Sex was seen as anarchic, a threat to order and stability, and eugenists were keen to subordinate sexual emotions to rationality and the 'eugenic conscience'. Blinded by emotion, it was feared, young men and women might overlook their responsibilities to the race and thus find themselves in an 'anti-eugenic union'. This fear explains the anxiety about the need for moral and sex education which was voiced at the inaugural meeting of the first branch of the Eugenics Education Society of New Zealand and the Society's call for the introduction of curfew law. At the risk of becoming enmeshed in Freudian theorising it seems plausible that this fear of sexuality was an important factor for some of those who advocated sterilization or de-sexualization. This would appear to be especially true of Miss Baughan, who advocated de-sexualization of not only the feeble-minded but also of the over-sexed.<sup>33</sup>

If eugenics was a response to change, it also offered reform. This reform was, however, along conservative lines and the call for revolutionary proposals such as sterilization and marriage certificates should not blind one to the fact that these were suggested as a means of preserving the social order. Eugenics not only offered a means of preserving society, it also offered an explanation for the ills which beset it without seriously questioning traditional values. Crime, prostitution, poverty and disease were seen as the result of heredity, as ills which were only to be expected so long as society tolerated the presence in it of the unfit. In 1928 B.L. Dallard, the Controller-General of Prisons, suggested

31 ODT, August 23, 1910, p.4.

32 Evidence of Dr Clark to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.13.

33 See Press, March 1, 1923, p.5. The operation, it was suggested, would lead to "greater mental activity, better self-control, and cleaner desires".

it must be recognized that a fairly high percentage of crime is due to mental deficiency, particularly feeble-mindedness, which is usually manifested by such characteristics as low intelligence, social inadequacy, and lack of initiative and self-control.<sup>34</sup>

Eugenics, then, offered an explanation for the causation of crime. This was especially important with regard to the apparently irrational or motiveless crimes such as wanton vandalism or sexual assaults on minors. The myth of the feeble-minded helped to explain such senseless acts and explained the failure of the education and judicial systems.<sup>35</sup> Feeble-mindedness was, then, seen as a major cause of anti-social conduct and during the debate on the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill the Minister of Health, J.A. Young, laid a variety of evils at the door of the 'social defective'. These included cruelty to animals and children, arson, wanton destruction, lying, "sneak-thieving", "silly practical jokes" and interference with the railways.<sup>36</sup>

In its concern with attacking the cause of crime and disease, eugenics offers a parallel to prohibition, its conservative basis matched by that of the prohibition movement.<sup>37</sup> The link went deeper than this - prohibitionists stressed the heredity ill-effects of alcohol and there was much debate on the relation between alcoholism and feeble-mindedness. The English eugenists William and Catherine Whetham claimed, for example, that sixty to seventy per cent of drunkards dealt with by the police were mentally defective.<sup>38</sup> The link between eugenics and prohibition was also seen by W.B. Benham, President of the Dunedin Branch of the Eugenics Education Society. Writing to the Otago Daily Times in response to a column by "Civis" which attacked "the Prohibitionist and his Eugenic backer"<sup>39</sup>, Benham observed that "the eugenicist... must support the prohibitionist on the fundamental question as to the effects of alcohol on humanity".<sup>40</sup> The link breaks down, however,

<sup>34</sup> Report on the Prisons Department, AJHR, 1928, H-20, p.13.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed discussion of the myth of the 'defective delinquent' see Haller, pp.95-123.

<sup>36</sup> NZPD, Vol. 217 (July 19, 1928), p.608; (July 24, 1928), p.697.

<sup>37</sup> Grigg observes that prohibition "offered a remedy for the economic, political, social and moral problems of the period without requiring any alteration of the existing capitalistic structure of the country", A.R. Grigg, "The Attack on the Citadels of Liquordom: A Study of the Prohibition Movement in New Zealand, 1894-1914", Ph.D. thesis, University of Otago, 1977, p.3.

<sup>38</sup> W.C.D. and C.D. Whetham, An Introduction to Eugenics, Cambridge, 1912, p.25.

<sup>39</sup> ODT, April 29, 1911, p.4.

<sup>40</sup> ODT, May 3, 1911, p.10.

when one attempts to trace the pro- or anti-prohibition views of members of the eugenics movement. The Eugenics Education Society included personnel like H.D. Bedford, a strong advocate of prohibition, and Professor W. Salmond, who opposed prohibition. The issue was, however, exploited by Dr. W.H. Symes, Vice-president of the Society's Christchurch branch in his tract Prohibition: A Racial Fallacy. In this the writer suggested that alcohol was a selective agency which visited its wrath only on those unable to resist it and hence that it performed a service to the race.<sup>41</sup> Alcoholism, he claimed, was only a symptom of a wider problem and "the real hereditary cause, the mental and moral deficiency, ... would continue in spite of prohibition".<sup>42</sup>

Also implicit in the appeal of eugenics was a curious blend of utopianism and science. That eugenics was a 'scientific' reform, complete with charts, family trees and references to overseas authorities, constitutes an important part of its appeal to a generation who held science in great respect. In 1908, for example, R.M. Beattie, the Medical Superintendent of Auckland Mental Hospital extolled sterilization as a "rational remedy" and denounced the "sickly sentimentalism" on which, he claimed, opposition to the measure was based.<sup>43</sup> It is important to note the plurality of viewpoints which existed in the eugenics movement. Indeed, the capacity to accommodate persons who sought to introduce a variety of reforms, including, for example, sex education, curfew law and sexual equality, was a major strength of eugenic thought. If eugenics provided a means of preserving the social order to some it is obvious that to others it offered a new utopia. Galton was well aware of this aspect of the creed which he helped shape and suggested that with "reasonable political action ... the Utopias in the dreamlands of philanthropists may become practical possibilities".<sup>44</sup>

- 41 W.H. Symes, Prohibition: A Racial Fallacy, Christchurch, 1911. p.5.  
In this Symes was repeating a view expounded by Haycraft in 1895.  
See J.B. Haycraft, Darwinism and Race Progress, London, 1895, p.75.
- 42 *ibid.*, p.7.
- 43 Report on the Mental Hospitals of the Dominion: Report of Medical Superintendent, Auckland Mental Hospital, AJHR, 1908, H-7, p.22.
- 44 F. Galton, Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws, (1869), London, 1962 Reprint, p.41.

Similarly, Haller suggests that the creed became "a sort of secular religion for many who dreamed of a society in which each child might be endowed with vigorous health and an able mind"<sup>45</sup> while Freeden has drawn attention to the reformist and progressive orientation of many of those in the English eugenics movement.<sup>46</sup> In New Zealand this attraction was seen in the liberal orientation of many of the politicians who joined the Eugenics Education Society and the reforming zeal of other members, like George Hogben.

If many of these figures entertained utopian notions of a race of healthy and contented citizens, the eminence of many who joined the Eugenics Education Society or who voiced eugenic concerns leads one to examine the class bias implicit or explicit in eugenics. It is obvious that this bias extended beyond the movement's membership and was central to its philosophy. The distinction between fit and unfit was inevitably based on social and economic lines and those who were poor, dirty or "a physical weed" were obviously degenerate.<sup>47</sup> The eugenicists' assessment of racial worth in these terms made it the more disturbing that urban middle-class couples were most successful at limiting their family size in these years. Class bias, then, underpinned the eugenicists' alarm at the differential birth rate, and in 1926 Dr J.S. Elliott, who had been a member of the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, informed the annual meeting of the Wellington branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children that

In tracing families it had been found  
... that, those who had been to universities  
were decreasing, whereas criminals and similar  
types, had increased enormously.<sup>48</sup>

This concern that the ranks of the ill-educated were increasing had been voiced to the Committee by one witness who feared the effects of "an uneducated, mentally inferior democracy".<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Haller, p.3.

<sup>46</sup> See Freeden, p.648.

<sup>47</sup> Description by H.W. Bishop of the father of an alleged degenerate, Press, August 30, 1911, p.8.

<sup>48</sup> Press cutting, New Zealand Times, October 26, 1926, Minute Book 1926-31, qMS NEW: Folder 9, p.128.

<sup>49</sup> Evidence of H. Binstead to Committee of Inquiry..., H3/13, p.236. The threat which the fertility of the unintelligent posed to a democracy was a source of anxiety to English and American eugenicists. See W.E. Castle, Genetics and Eugenics, Massachusetts, 1930, p.386; R.B. Catell, The Fight For Our National Intelligence, London, 1937, p.108.

The extreme hereditarianism which underlay eugenics also offered a comforting explanation of class differences - social failure was the result of genetic taint. Nature, however, was not always nice about following the geneticists' firm rules and consequently defective progeny occasionally sprung forth from 'respectable' stock. Such aberrations from eugenic theory were fortunate, however, that the privileges of class and wealth allowed them to be shielded from the public gaze by being privately nursed. Consequently, one can detect, perhaps, a trace of class bias in the anxiety voiced by the Wellington Branch of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children that where parents or guardians were able to provide care the registration provisions of the Mental Defectives Amendment Bill should be waived.<sup>50</sup>

Eugenics, then, constituted an important facet of New Zealand's social history in this period and although never a popular movement, enjoyed wide currency in academic, political, medical and social service circles. From the first years of the century, when eugenic notions were first voiced by W.A. Chapple and a handful of politicians the creed gradually gained recognition and respect. In this process the Eugenics Education Society of New Zealand played an important role, lobbying politicians, giving lectures on heredity, attracting the attention of the press and distributing eugenics literature. The history of the Society itself is far from spectacular - meetings frequently only attracted 'fair' attendances and this lack of public support was to finally spell the end of the Society. More spectacular was the Society's ability to attract eminent political, clerical, educational and medical figures and to enlist them as honorary office-holders.

Despite the Society's demise in 1914 eugenic attitudes were frequently voiced in the following decade as a variety of issues - venereal diseases, incipient mental illness, sexual crime and the plight of the feeble-minded - attracted national attention. The real significance of eugenics, however, lies perhaps, not so much in its influence on those in the field of policy making but in everyday terms which are difficult to assess.

<sup>50</sup> Minutes of meeting, July 27, 1928, Minute Book 1926-31, qMS NEW, Folder 9, p.128.

Through its influence on school medical officers, doctors, and social workers , many of whom displayed eugenic attitudes during the hearing of evidence by the Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, the eugenic creed and all that it implied inevitably touched the lives of many New Zealanders.

## APPENDIX

Literature Pertaining to the Eugenics Education Society  
of New Zealand.1. Aims and Objects.**The Eugenics Education Society**  
OF NEW ZEALAND,

FOUNDED IN DUNEDIN.

*(Affiliated with the London Eugenics Education Society.)***For the Moral, Mental, and Physical Improvement of  
the Race.**

1. The Society is known as the "Eugenics Education Society."

2. The objects of the Society are:—

- (1) To set forth persistently the National Importance of Eugenics in order to modify public opinion, and to create a sense of responsibility in the respect of bringing all matters pertaining to human parenthood under the domination of Eugenic ideals.
- (2) To spread a knowledge of the Laws of Heredity so far as they are surely known, and so far as that knowledge may affect the improvement of the race.
- (3) To further Eugenic teaching at home, in the schools, and elsewhere.

3. The Society shall consist of Life Members, Members and Associates. Life Membership Fee shall be £3 3/-; Members shall pay 5/- a year, and Associates 1/-. Members alone shall have the right to vote at meetings of the Society, and alone shall be eligible for the Council. Members and Associates shall be elected by the Council.

4. The Society shall be governed by a Council not exceeding twenty Members, who shall be elected at the annual meeting. From those so elected the Council shall choose a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, and a Secretary. The Council shall fix its own meetings. The annual meeting of the Society shall be held in the month of August.

**METHODS OF WORK.**

The Council shall appoint Committees to give special attention to different branches of the work, e.g.—(1) A Literature Committee; (2) an Editorial Committee; (3) an Education Committee:—each Committee to deal with the subject from the standpoint of (a) Science, (b) Medicine, (c) Education, (d) Religion.

1. The work of the Literature Committee shall be to direct Members in the study of Eugenics, and to select literature either for a library or for distribution.

2. The work of the Editorial Committee shall be to supply the Press with information on Eugenics.

3. The work of the Education Committee shall be to inform the public of the objects of the Society and educate them as to the scope of Eugenics:—

- (a) By a short course of Lectures on the facts relating to Parenthood and Heredity in Plants, Animals, and Human Beings.
- (b) By periodical meetings at which members shall read Papers on various aspects and problems of Eugenics, such as—
  1. The relative strength of Nature and Nurture.
  2. Eugenic Education in the Home.
  3. Eugenics in the Church.
  4. Eugenics and Alcoholism.
  5. Eugenics and Crime.

And other topics in which the knowledge of Eugenics may lead to the Improvement of the Race.

Source: The Fowlds Papers,  
University of Auckland  
Library.

2. Form of letter used to solicit support.

## The Eugenics Education Society of New Zealand.

FOUNDED IN DUNEDIN.

(Affiliated with the London Eugenics Education Society.)

FOR THE MENTAL, MORAL, AND PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE RACE.



Hon. President: HON. J. G. FINDLAY, LL.D., K.C., M.L.C., Attorney-General N.Z.

President: Prof. W. B. BENHAM, D.Sc., F.R.S.

Vice-Presidents: Rev. Canon CURZON-SIGGERS, M.A., Miss EMILY SIEDENBERG, M.B., B.Sc., L.R.C.P.I., W. J. WILDE, M.B., C.M., A. H. GRINLING.

Hon. Treasurer: H. D. BEDFORD, M.A., LL.M.

Hon. Secretary: Miss MACGEORGE.

*Dunedin.*

To

*(Form of Letter being used)*

Dear Sir,

The ever-increasing need for the attention of all persons being drawn to the Science of EUGENICS, or RACE CULTURE, has led to the formation of the above Society. The accompanying papers give a very brief outline of its aims, to which we hope to have from you a very hearty response.

Since "Self-Preservation and Race-Preservation together constitute the law of life," we are confident that a perusal of the enclosed cannot but engage your interest, and we trust that you will in some way join forces with us, and will seek too, to draw the recognition of many to their individual responsibility towards the Race, and also to minimise the moral, mental, and physical evils that tend to its deterioration.

With compliments,

We are,

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd) W. B. Benham, President.

(Sgd) / Miss / L. Macgeorge, Hon. Sec.

# HEREDITY & EUGENICS

LECTURE BY DR. BENHAM.

(Reprinted from *The Otago Daily Times*, December 1, 1910.)

The first of a series of public lectures under the auspices of the newly-formed Eugenics Society, was delivered by Dr Benham in the Oddfellows' Hall, Stuart street, Dunedin, on Wednesday, November 30, 1910. There were present fully a hundred ladies and gentlemen, including many representatives of the University teaching staff and of the medical profession, and others prominent in educational circles. Dr Church presided.

Dr Benham said he proposed to discuss in a very elementary fashion indeed some of the fundamental facts of heredity, on which the science of eugenics is based, and then to refer to certain problems which it was hoped this society would undertake. The fact of inheritance, he pointed out, so commonplace to us all, was when seen through the trained mind and eyes of the zoologist, one of the most wonderful and mysterious things in nature. That like produces like is one of the universal laws of nature as definite and as constant as the law of gravity. Another universal law of nature was that every animal begins its life in the form of a cell. The lecturer, with the aid of a blackboard, proceeded to trace the early development and life history of a starfish; but it must be confessed, he said, that we were in total ignorance of why all this occurred. Each of us was found to be a mosaic of ancestral peculiarities, and Francis Galton had summarised the facts in his law of ancestral inheritance. There was a very widespread opinion that if we improved the general conditions of life the next generation would in some way be bettered, but careful study led us to doubt seriously whether this was true. There were two distinct kinds of characters exhibited by any individual—those inherent in the germ cells and those acquired during life. The children of the navy were not stronger than the children of the philosopher, nor would the children of the philosopher have better brains than those of the navy. Each of these parents had added something to his birthright, and these additions were not handed on to his offspring. Zoologists refused to admit that acquired characters were transmissible, and so in place of temporary philanthropy the society wished to substitute the study of eugenics. The aim of this study was nothing less than the improvement of the race. Man is what he is, at any rate physically, owing to the general action of natural selection, and by this agency he has obtained dominion over the rest of the animal kingdom. The chief difference from the lower animals lay in the comparatively immense brain of man, and all other differences were the outcome of this. Discoveries of recent years carried the race back for some 50,000 years at least, and during all that time the brain had been developing. Hence if there was evidence that the brainy portion of the population was diminishing there was cause for

alarm. Statistics showed that the decrease in the birth rate was greatest in those classes most likely to be useful to the community, while the birth rate was actually increasing among the unfit. In England the average number of births per marriage is 4.7, while among the degenerate classes the average is 7.3. In America the classes of ability are not even reproducing themselves, as the average number of births per marriage is less than two. The independence of women and their higher education were no doubt factors in this decline, and while this improvement in their status should be appreciated and their higher education fostered, yet this should not be carried to the point at which motherhood is compromised. Eugenists suggested two methods of possible procedure that had been termed positive and negative eugenics. By positive eugenics was meant selection for parenthood. It was hoped to establish a strong public opinion in favour of the healthy both in body and mind being encouraged to mate. The society wished to educate parents in the facts of heredity so that they might instruct their children in the nature of parenthood and of the natural functions of the body. By negative eugenics was meant the prevention of parenthood of the obviously unfit. It had been asked—How are we to distinguish the unfit? But, as Pearson pointed out, "When we turn to the habitual criminal, the tubercular, the insane, the mentally afflicted, the alcoholic, the diseased either from birth or from excess, there can be little doubt of their social unfitness." After referring to the hereditary consequences of alcoholism, Dr Benham passed on to make forcible reference to the group of contagious diseases recently dealt with in a bill of Dr Findlay's. He congratulated Dr Findlay on his courage in trying to formulate means to abate this terrible scourge—(applause)—and even if the bill did not effect all its author hoped it was an effort along right lines. Assuredly it was possible for the clergyman, the doctor, the teacher, even the leader in fashion to strengthen such eugenic forces as already existed in society without outraging sentiment or custom. He concluded an optimistic forecast with Ruskin's words, "There is as yet no ascertained limit to the nobleness of person and mind which the human creature may attain by persevering observance of the laws of God respecting its birth and training."

The lecture, which lasted for about an hour and a-quarter, was full of clearly stated, scientific information and striking practical deductions therefrom, and was delivered with an authority and conviction that held the closest attention of the audience throughout. At its close a very hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Dr Benham by acclamation, and a similar compliment was paid to the chairman.

DAILY TIMES PRINT.

Source: U.B. Benham, Heredity and Eugenics, Dunedin, 1910 [?].

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